

The Augusta: Matronal Virtue and
Maternal Status in Imperial Rome

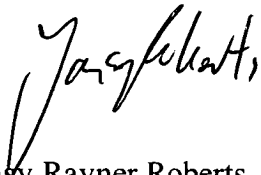
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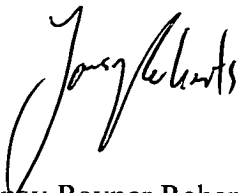
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All translations are my own unless otherwise cited.

Abbreviations

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|------------------------|--|
| <i>AbhBerlin</i> | <i>Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin.</i> |
| <i>AHB</i> | <i>The Ancient History Bulletin.</i> |
| <i>AJA</i> | <i>American Journal of Archaeology.</i> |
| <i>AJPh</i> | <i>American Journal of Philology.</i> |
| <i>BMC</i> | Mattingly, H. (ed.) (1962) <i>Coins of the British Museum</i> [British Museum Publications, London]. |
| <i>CIG</i> | Boeckhius, A. <i>et al</i> (eds.) (1977) <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> [Hildesheim, G. Olm, reprint of the 1828-1877 ed. published by Officina Academica, Berlin]. |
| <i>CIL</i> | West, A.B. (ed.) (1931) <i>Corinth: Latin Inscriptions 1896-1926</i> [Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.] |
| <i>CR</i> | <i>Classical Review.</i> |
| <i>CSEL</i> | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.</i> |
| <i>G & R</i> | <i>Greece and Rome.</i> |
| <i>IG</i> | <i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> , Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (1924). |
| <i>IGR</i> | Cagnat, R.L.V. (1964) <i>Inscriptiones graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes: auctoritate et impensis Academiae Inscriptionum et Litterarum Humaniorum collectae et editae</i> [L'Erma, Rome, reprint of 1901-1927 ed., Leroux, Paris]. |
| <i>ILS</i> | Dessau, H. (ed.) (1962) <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> [apud Weidmannos, Berlin]. |
| <i>JRS</i> | <i>The Journal of Roman Studies.</i> |
| <i>PCPhS</i> | <i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society.</i> |
| <i>PIR</i> | Groag, E. <i>et al.</i> (1933) <i>Prosopographia - Imperii Romani - Saec. I. II. III</i> [Walter de Gruyter & Co, Berlin]. |
| <i>PIR²</i> | Groag, E. & Stein, A. (1958); <i>Prosopographia - Imperii Romani - Saec. I. II. III - Pars II</i> [Walter de Gruyter & Co, Berlin]. |
| <i>RIC</i> | Mattingly, H. & Sydenham, E.A. (eds.) (1923) <i>The Roman Imperial Coinage</i> [Spink, London]. |
| <i>TAPhA</i> | <i>Transactions of the American Philological Association.</i> |
| <i>ZPE</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik.</i> |

Introduction

Between 14 CE and 235 CE, at least 28 women received the title Augusta. They were all close relatives of the emperor, usually his mother or wife but sometimes his sister, niece, daughter or grandmother. But what did it mean to be an Augusta?¹ The literary sources provide a chronology of whom received the title and under what circumstances, and yet there is little mention of the title's actual significance. If the title of Augusta conveyed only a slight or apolitical honour, why did Claudius deny the title to Messalina, why did Plotina and Marciana refuse it when it was first offered to them and, even more significantly, why was the title formally removed from Didia Clara after the death of her father?²

If there was a higher significance to the title, then what was it? This noticeable lack of information in the ancient sources has not been sufficiently questioned or addressed by modern scholarship, and this thesis aims to rectify this matter by examining the history and iconography associated with the women who held the title of Augusta in order to present a case that the title had a singular, specific dynastic purpose as well as a number of associated connotations.

¹ The meaning of what it was to be an Augustus has been quite comprehensively examined, particularly by Hammond, and it is clear that there are powerful linguistic connotations linking *Augusta* and *Augustus*. The manner in which the title Augusta was given and received, however, links it more closely with the imperial title of *Pater Patriae*, and it can more comfortably be seen as a feminine equivalent of this title rather than the weightier *Augustus*. Hammond, *The Augustan Principate* pp. 110-113; Hammond, *The Antonine Monarchy* p.11, pp. 60-61, p. 90.

² See pages 32 (Messalina) 55, 109-110 (Plotina and Marciana), 72 (Didia Clara) of this thesis.

The evidence suggests that the meaning conveyed by the title Augusta was largely maternal in nature: the children of any woman who held the title were thus acknowledged as being dynastically relevant, and the title was often given to a woman in order to augment her son's (and to a lesser extent in some cases, her daughter's) imperial status. The Augusta was expected to be many things: a public icon of wifely virtue (*pudicitia*), a vessel for sacred status and religious duty, the living face behind public portraits that represented the female component of the imperial family, and in some cases she could even be consecrated as a goddess after her death. But all of these key elements of the Augusta's public image served one predominant purpose: to bestow a high level of imperial status upon her children and other descendants, marking them out as worthy Augusti and Caesars. The Augusta's role was to be a wife and a mother: a symbol of imperial fertility and dynasty, and a vessel through which imperial status could be conveyed. The title Augusta was specifically utilised to mark out the women who were dynastically relevant to the imperial family.

The maternal significance of the title Augusta is not always obvious from the source material. This is particularly the case during the Julio-Claudian era, when the title (and the choice of what kind of woman was to be honoured with the title) was still to some extent being developed. However, it is significant that even women who were not and were not expected to become mothers (as for example the middle-aged, barren recipients of the title such as Plotina and Sabina) were still powerfully associated with maternal symbology and iconography. The contention of this thesis is that the imperial wives received their most substantial honours because of their role as dynastic vessels, real or honorary, rather than just because they were married

to the emperor. The most intriguing element about the title *Augusta* is that it was awarded to so many women who were not imperial wives, and indeed that being an imperial wife did not automatically grant the right to be named *Augusta*. There was a flexibility to the awarding of the title that allowed the emperor to choose which women of his family would be thus honoured, and correspondingly, which men would benefit from their familial relationship to the new *Augusta*.

It is this flexibility that renders any discussion of the meaning of the title somewhat problematic – we do not know if the emperors themselves had a specific definition in mind for the title, or indeed if it was left deliberately undefined. But the maternal as well as matronal connotations that built up around that title over several dynasties are substantial enough to warrant some analysis of their significance, whether or not those connotations were intentional on the part of the emperors who bestowed (or allowed) the titles.

The study of imperial women over the last fifteen years has been characterised by a move away from a literary approach in order to encompass more varied source materials such as art, archaeology, numismatics and epigraphy. The common hostility towards powerful or ambitious women in the ancient literary sources has often inspired similarly hostile forms of modern scholarship, particularly in the case of the Julio-Claudian women.³ Likewise, the limited references to some imperial women in the ancient sources makes it difficult to approach the subject purely through the analysis of the relevant literature. Works such as the *Historia Augusta* are particularly problematic, as they are not considered to be very reliable sources at

³ e.g. Syme, *Tacitus* ; Bauman, *Women and Politics*.

all, and yet they provide the majority of the “biographical” details available for many of the imperial women of the Antonine and Severan dynasties. However problematic these sources are, it is just as problematic to dismiss them because of their inherent contradictions and apparent inaccuracies. In a recent biographical study on the Roman *Kaiserinnen*, Eck introduces a section on the later Julio-Claudians by discussing the matter of literary methodology in relation to the imperial women.⁴ He observes that rejection of the literary sources for such reasons as biased male perspective provides something of a negative vortex, leaving the scholar with no material at all to work with.⁵ This is certainly true, and yet it is no solution to place wholehearted reliance on the opinions and perspectives contained within those literary sources. An interdisciplinary approach allows these textual portraits of imperial women – whether or not they are hostile and unreliable - to be used far more constructively and critically in relation to other source material.

This current preference for interdisciplinary methodology in the study of imperial women allows for a more balanced analysis of the role of these women, with a particular focus on the physical evidence surrounding them during their lifetimes. Numismatic, sculptural and inscriptional evidence often offers a dramatic contrast to the evidence contained within the literary sources, and the most notable characteristic of the scholars who form part of this interdisciplinary approach to the scholarship of imperial women is that they do not automatically assume that in the case of a contradiction, the literary evidence has precedence.

⁴ Eck, “Die iulisch-claudische Familie,” pp. 103-106.

⁵ Eck, “Die iulisch-claudische Familie,” p. 104.

Like the literary evidence itself, each of the evidence types have their own difficult and at times controversial natures. The coinage provides a wealth of images, titles and iconography alongside the portraits and names of the emperors and various members of the imperial family. In the case of many of the imperial women, this is the largest body of physical evidence we have. Evaluating the significance of such information, however, is problematic, particularly in relation to the political, aesthetic and personal intentions of the emperors. Barbara Levick discusses the changing attitudes towards numismatic evidence throughout the twentieth century, noting the conflict between scholars who accept and those that deny the significance of the chosen reverse types in relation to the imperial person depicted on the obverse of imperial coin types.⁶ She argues that it is legitimate to examine ways of interpreting numismatic imagery beyond that of imperial propaganda (or as Levick prefers; “publicity”), and that there are certainly some examples of overt contradiction between some known imperial policies and contemporaneous examples of official coin types; but it is possible to acknowledge some of these problematic elements without disregarding the potential political significance of the extant imagery from the imperial coinage of Rome.⁷ Indeed, Levick’s own argument is that the imagery on the coinage may have been selected to flatter and pay tribute the emperor, rather than being selected by the emperor as a method of controlling his own publicity.⁸ There is no scholarly consensus on the relative validity or actual motivations behind the choice of numismatic imagery upon the imperial coinage, and so this evidence, as with all other forms of material and literary evidence, is best

⁶ Levick, “Propaganda and the Imperial Coinage,” pp. 104-16.

⁷ Levick, “Propaganda and the Imperial Coinage,” pp. 105-7.

⁸ Levick, “Propaganda and the Imperial Coinage,” p. 107.

used in cross-reference to other, no less problematic forms of evidence, in the hope of building up a balanced picture.

Likewise, the use of statuary as source material for the public opinion and possible imperial motivations surrounding the public image of imperial women has its own set of problems, the most significant of these stems from identification. Cross-referencing with numismatic evidence has allowed us to firmly identify a large body of imperial portraiture, but particularly in the case of the imperial women, there are many portraits and even whole portrait types which remain controversial. This problem is exacerbated by the tradition whereby imperial women who are contemporary to each other are portrayed with very similar facial characteristics and hairstyles. This is particularly the case with the Julio-Claudian women; many portraits once identified as Octavia are now believed to be Livia.⁹ This problem of identification carries through almost all examples of imperial portrait statuary, and becomes clearly problematic when one scholar has used particular attributes to identify that statue, and another assumes that identification to be correct and analyses the significance of those attributes to that person. However, it would be equally problematic to concentrate merely on identification and leave the possible significance of such attributes unexamined.

Epigraphy is another form of primary source material that has proven invaluable in the study of women – particularly in the case of lower class women, of whose lives we have little else in the way of evidence, direct or otherwise.¹⁰ Epigraphy can also

⁹ Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 51.

¹⁰ Shelton demonstrates the usefulness of epigraphy in the study of social history of the Ancient Romans, while Lefkowitz. & Fant do the same for the study of women in the ancient world. Shelton,

provide a wealth of information about the imperial family due to the sheer numbers of inscriptions that can be examined and compared. Many of the recent interdisciplinary scholars who have written about imperial women have used epigraphy as a substantial component of their study.¹¹ Hahn's substantial catalogue of inscriptions relevant to the imperial women is an invaluable resource in this regard, as she makes it possible for us to see at a glance the comparative epigraphical evidence for the women of the imperial family.¹² As Barrett notes, we can rarely rely on epigraphy for concrete data on political history given that the greater body of this evidence comes from the provinces, and the nomenclature does not always correspond to that from within Rome itself, and thus cannot always be taken to reflect official Roman policy.¹³ The value in the epigraphs concerning specific imperial figures then is a more general sense of how highly that person was regarded in particular provinces, and whether they thought that promoting that person would gain them favour from Rome.

The proponents of interdisciplinary methodology have generally restricted their studies to specific women or groups of women, in order to more deeply analyse their cases. The women most strongly represented in these works are those who have been most demonised in the past: Livia and Agrippina.¹⁴ Other imperial women have also been singled out in this manner, including Antonia, Domitia Longina, and Julia Domna, while the Julio-Claudian and "adoptive" eras have been examined

As the Romans Did; Lefkowitz & Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*.

¹¹ e.g. Barrett, *Livia*; Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*; Temporini, H. *Die Frauen*.

¹² Hahn, *Die Frauen*.

¹³ Barrett, *Livia*, p.265.

¹⁴ Eck, *Agrippina*; Perkounig, *Livia Drusilla – Iulia Augusta*; Barrett, *Agrippina*; Kleiner, "Imperial Women as Patrons;" Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*; Kleiner, "Family Ties;" Winkes, "Livia - Portrait and Propaganda;" Barrett, *Livia*; Ginsburg, *Representing Agrippina*. *Note: the Ginsburg book was only available to me in the final weeks of preparing my dissertation, so is not fully addressed in the main chapters.*

individually.¹⁵ Cresswell attempted to fill several of the “gaps” in this scholarship, focussing upon Flavia Domitilla and Fulvia (as a prototype for the imperial woman) as well as Plotina, Sabina and Julia Domna.¹⁶

What the scholarship utilising this methodology has hitherto lacked has been, firstly, an analysis of what specific honour was intended by the bestowal of the title of Augusta upon so many women of the imperial family. Scholars like Mullens & Temporini who have made an attempt to discuss the title Augusta in a larger historical sense have nevertheless failed to convey a comprehensive study as to the meaning of the title.¹⁷ This relates to the second distinct lack in the scholarship utilising the new methodology of imperial femininity: namely, an attempt to apply the methodology to a larger range of imperial women than a single figure or dynasty. Even Cresswell, whose thesis title (*Augusta - Images of the Empress and Roman Imperial Power*) suggests that she intends to tackle the Augusta question, is instead primarily concerned with the role of the “empress” in Rome.

¹⁵ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta* (Antonia); Varner, “Domitia Longina,” (Domitia); Lusnia, “Julia Domna’s Coinage,” and Gorrie, “Julia Domna’s Building Patronage,” (Julia Domna); Wood, *Imperial Women* (the Julio-Claudians); Boatwright, “Imperial Women,” and Fittschen, “Courtly Portraits,” (the Trajanic-Hadrianic era).

¹⁶ Cresswell, *Augusta*.

¹⁷ Mullens proposes a theory as to the meaning of the title Augusta which is similar to that of this thesis: that the title had a specific dynastic connotation that invested the woman who held it with a certain degree of power over the succession; he primarily bases this theory, however, on the evidence of Agrippina (whose attempt to control the Julio-Claudian dynasty can not be read as a success). While Mullens refers to Poppaea, Plotina and Faustina Major in relation to his theory, he fails to make a definitive or convincing case. Temporini presents a narrative overview of the women who received the title Augusta, as a small part of a text that is primarily concerned with Plotina and Sabina. She briefly examines the use of the title Augusta to support the imperial claim of new emperors, and makes some interesting correlations between the bestowal of Augusta and that of Pater Patriae during the Adoptive and Antonine dynasties. Mullens, “Women of the Caesars,” p. 66; Temporini, *Die Frauen* pp. 25-42.

The most thorough treatment of the Augusta question in recent years has been that of Barrett, as part of his comprehensive study of the life and public image of Livia.¹⁸

He notes the development of the title over the years, and presents the scholarly arguments of the past that have supported or rejected the notion that the title Augusta conferred any political or constitutional power upon the woman in question.¹⁹

However, Barrett's priority in this discussion is to discuss the meaning of the title in relation to Livia alone, and how it affected her public image. Likewise, when Barrett presents an overview of the use of the title Augusta throughout the Julio-Claudian era, his aim is to demonstrate the effect that his biographical subject had upon her successors, and he only fleetingly makes reference to the continuance of the title beyond that dynasty.²⁰ The significance of the title of Augusta has not been fully explored because of the limited period of reference, and because the title itself has not been the focus of any single study.

While a focus on an individual woman has many benefits, there is also much to be drawn from an overview of imperial women as a whole group. Such a study allows for the analysis of patterns and comparison that is simply not possible in a smaller, more specific study. Wood goes some way to applying the new methodology to a range of imperial women, but her work is limited to the Julio-Claudians.²¹ Other works which have looked at a broader range of imperial women, such as those of Balsdon and Giacosa, are too general, and are not recent enough to benefit from the change in attitude that the new methodology has provided.²² At first glance, the excellent overview provided by the recent German text *Kaiserinnen Roms* edited by

¹⁸ Barrett, *Livia* pp. 152-154, 322-323.

¹⁹ Barrett, *Livia* pp. 152-153.

²⁰ Barrett, *Livia* p. 152, pp. 322-323.

²¹ Wood, *Imperial Women*.

²² Balsdon, *Roman Women*; Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*.

Temporini appears to fill this gap in the scholarship, but again this is a text concerned primarily with narrative rather than analysis, and the lack of scholarly citations and references throughout renders it less than useful as an academic work.²³

The question of what was meant by the bestowal of the title Augusta upon so many imperial women can only be fully addressed by taking the longer historical view, from the origins of the title under the Julio-Claudians through to the powerful women who used the title to determine the succession during the Severan period. The development and connotations of the title Augusta changed from dynasty to dynasty, and the long historical view allows for a wider perspective of how the title affected the public image of the woman who received it. While the title of Augusta continued (after a fifty year hiatus) until the end of the Roman empire itself, the death of Alexander proves a logical stopping place for this particular study, allowing perhaps for a future study that deals comparatively with the significance of the title Augusta under the Christian emperors.

Chapter 1 provides a chronologically organised historical overview of the first 28 women who held the title Augusta, the circumstances under which they received it, and the development of the title as a significant honour in its own right. But what kind of honour did the title Augusta represent? Rather than being a powerless, apolitical and feminised version of Caesar or Augustus, Augusta had a specific meaning of its own, conveying imperial status upon the sons of the woman who held the title; many emperors gave their own mother the title Augusta to support their imperial claim, or gave the title to imperial women (not necessarily their wives)

²³ Temporini, *Kaiserinnen Roms*.

whom they wanted to bear heirs for the succession. This chapter provides a context for the later, more analytical chapters. It also looks at some women who were deliberately refused the title Augusta, or who might have been expected to receive the honour but did not, and examines reasons why this might have been the case.

Chapter 2 explores the importance of domestic and wifely virtue to the public image of the Augustae, and examines how their image as the ideal Roman matrona (as well as the symbolic concepts of *univira* and *pudicitia*) served to augment the reputation of their husbands, and their emperors, as well as promoting their role as the mothers and potential mothers of the Augusti and Caesars.

Chapter 3 demonstrates the importance of maternal imagery to the public image of the Augustae, and furthers the argument that motherhood rather than wifehood was the more important aspect of the title Augusta, and how this affected the public images of the women who held that title. Even in the case of women who were not and could not be thought to even potentially be mothers (such as those who received the title when too old to bear children), a strong tradition of honorary motherhood and fictive fertility supports their status as Augustae.

Chapter 4 supports the thesis of the importance of maternity to the title Augusta through analysis of the most prominent goddesses associated with the public image of the Augustae, all of whom were symbolic of maternity and fertility. Also of interest is the absence of references in the public image of the Augustae to certain goddesses who did not evoke these vital maternal themes.

Chapter 5 presents the religious roles and sacred status surrounding many of the women who held the title Augustae, and argues that this religious status was another element used to promote the Augustae as vessels of imperial status on behalf of their children as well as (in the case of imperial wives) their husbands.

My aim with this dissertation is to comprehensively answer the question of the effect that the title Augusta had upon the status of each woman upon whom it was bestowed, and what honour or intention the emperor and the senate wished to convey when they allowed the title to be formally bestowed. In some cases there are contradictions between the way that the title affected the public images of different women, particularly in the early days when the meaning of the title was still being developed, but my focus is primarily upon the continuities and patterns that emerge from this study. The source material consulted is necessarily varied, and is particularly reliant on the epigraphic, sculptural and numismatic evidence in order to bring a new perspective to the literary evidence.

Chapter One: The History of the *Augusta*

The study of imperial women in Ancient Rome makes it necessary to invent a vocabulary: while the English language has terms for various kinds of royal women, including queens, princesses and empresses, there were no Latin terms in common usage to describe the status or position of any of the imperial women, whether they were wives, sisters, daughters, mothers, or any other relative of the emperor. In German, the imperial wives of Rome are referred to as *Kaiserinnen*, or female Caesars; there was, however, no feminine equivalent of “Caesar” during the Roman imperial period.¹ Scholars often use “empress” to refer to the emperor’s wife, and yet because we take “emperor” from the Latin *imperator*, which is a specifically masculine title of power and political significance, feminising the title is again misleading. The word “empress” implies that the role of imperial wife had an automatic significance and status that it certainly did not, and the usage of this word in modern scholarship propagates this implication.²

¹ In his review of *Die Kaiserinnen Roms*, Barrett appears perplexed by Temporini’s liberal extension of the word *Kaiserinnen* to include concubines and foreigners such as Zenobia and Berenice. This betrays a common assumption that being married to an emperor was somehow a significant honour in itself, despite the widespread evidence that the emperors allowed their wives vastly different levels of status and privilege, and that there were certainly no default honours or honorifics attached to that role. If we interpret, as Temporini does, the word *Kaiserinnen* to mean women of the Caesars, then there is absolutely no reason why the word should not be inclusive of Zenobia, Berenice or Caenis as well as the legitimate Roman wives of emperors, and the many close female relatives who are often ignored in the scholarship despite evidence that they received substantial honours during their lifetime. Temporini, *Kaiserinnen Roms*; Barrett, “Imperial Women,” p.179.

² My opinion on the counter-productive nature of the word “empress” in the context of the study of Roman imperial women is shared by Gruen, who elaborated upon the matter in an introduction to the recent work *Representing Agrippina* by Judith Ginsburg, which appeared in print very close to the completion of this thesis. Cresswell also addressed the distinction between *Augusta* and “empress,” though she continued the scholarly tradition of using the term “empress” to imply that an emperor’s wife was entitled to a specific status; an implication not supported by the primary evidence. Due to the misleading nature of the word “empress,” I have refrained from using it throughout except where the word itself is being discussed. Gruen, “Introduction,” p. 4; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 1.

The Romans themselves invented occasional terminology to flatter and describe the imperial women. Ovid uses the pleasing *princeps femina* to describe Livia, an appellation that could be applied to many prominent imperial women.³ *Princeps femina* is also used in the *Consolatio ad Liviam* in reference to Antonia, while Livia is referred to as *Romana princeps*.⁴ Both of these terms, comfortably translated as “first lady” or “first lady of Rome,” work especially well when the most prominent and politically significant woman of the imperial household is not the wife of the *princeps*, as was the case with Livia during the reign of Tiberius, Agrippina Minor during the reign of Nero, the Severan Julias during the reigns of Caracalla, Elagabalus and Alexander, and even Drusilla during the reign of Caligula. The phrase only becomes problematic when there is more than one prominent woman of similar or equal status in the imperial family such as the pairings of Plotina with Marciana or Matidia, and the dual role of Faustina Minor and Lucilla as wives of the co-emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. Can there be more than one first lady? The very nature of the phrase suggests not, and an over-reliance on its use could add to the general misapprehension that one woman must necessarily be raised higher in status than all others; not only is this not always the case throughout Roman imperial history, but during certain reigns, such as those of Augustus and Trajan, it was a situation that was deliberately circumvented in order to present certain imperial women as equals to each other in status.⁵ Also, despite the political undertone of *princeps femina*, we must be careful not to assume that it had any constitutional significance beyond the flattering words of poets. There simply was no official term that described the position of the imperial women during the Roman

³ Ovid, *Tristia* 3.6.25-3.6.26; *ex Ponto* 3.1.125.

⁴ *Cons. Liv.* 353-365.

⁵ This is particularly relevant in the public representation of Livia and Octavia, Plotina and Marciana, and Plotina and Matidia. See pages 35, 55-58, 90.

empire. The first ladies of Rome were not called consorts, empresses, queens, princesses and certainly not Caesaresses; they were merely the mothers, aunts, wives, sisters, daughters and nieces of the emperor.

A select number of these women, however, received an honorific title which appears to imply an imperial equivalence with the Augusti and Caesars, the significance of which has often been overlooked: they were named Augusta. The only method of determining what it meant to be an Augusta is to examine the history of women who received the title and the way in which “Augusta” evolved as a word, a title and as a symbol of imperial Roman womanhood. This chapter will follow the chronology of the title Augusta from its inception in 14 CE through to the end of the Severan dynasty in 235 CE, in order to present the dynastic and maternal connotations of the title within a historical context.

The linguistic similarity between the male *Augustus* and female *Augusta* must obviously have had some effect on the reception of this feminine title from its inception in 14 CE.⁶ As will be seen, the title Augusta had an identity and significance quite distinct from its male counterpart, and was not just an apolitical, feminised version of the title that conveyed an emperor’s ultimate status. Augusta was an official title which had to be ratified by the senate and the emperor, and was only presented to the most significant women in the emperor’s family. Just as only the emperor and his closest male relatives (those who were co-rulers, heirs or designated heirs) were awarded the titles of Caesar or the more politically significant Augustus, the women who were Augusta were marked out as the most important

⁶ The sacred aspects of *Augustus* are discussed on pages 228-231. The sacred aspects of *Augusta* are discussed throughout chapter 5, pages 228-276.

female figures to the imperial dynasty.⁷⁸

The Greek word *sebastê*, a common epigraphical epithet, should also be taken into account, as it is often translated as *Augusta*. While the word *augusta* may literally translate as *sebastê* and *vice versa*, this translation can be misleading, as references in provincial inscriptions do not necessarily correspond with Roman nomenclature.⁹ The Augustae (especially those who were also imperial wives) were commonly heralded in the East as *sebastê*, but it is important not to assume that a woman heralded as *sebastê* in Eastern inscriptions had formally been awarded the title of Augusta. This is relevant in the identification of which women were named Augusta.

While the word *Augusta* implies an association with the Augustan age, the title did not exist at all during the reign of the first Augustus. Augustus posthumously adopted his widow, Livia Drusilla, in his will; an act that conferred upon her the new name of Julia Augusta, thereby bringing the word *augusta* into the Latin language.¹⁰ Even at this stage, it is unlikely that the bestowal of “Augusta” was merely a name. “Augustus” was not the personal name of this emperor, but the public title he held, denoting his rank and status. The adoption and the bestowal of “Augusta” was just one of many honours awarded to Livia during her lifetime. She had been the most prominent and exalted woman of Rome throughout her husband’s reign, and now

⁷ For a more detailed examination of the interconnection of titles and names belonging to emperors, see Hammond, *The Antonine Monarchy*, pp. 60-61.

⁸ See pages 26-27, 32-33 (Claudius), 47 (Vitellius), 48-50 (Titus).

⁹ See page 259 for discussion of the non-Augustae who received the epithet *sebastê* in Eastern inscriptions. Kokkinos, who presents the argument for the less formal use of *sebastê* than *Augusta* in the East, uses the examples of Julia (daughter of Augustus) and Drusilla. The translation of *sebastoi* as a reference to the (male) Augusti is less problematic, and refers to both the living emperor as well as the posthumous/deified emperor, though Kokkinos argues that *sebastoi* is also applied less strictly in the East than Augustus was in Rome. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 270; Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 103, pp. 269-270.

¹⁰ Suet. *Aug.* 101; Tac. *Ann.* 1.8.1, 5.1.1.

continued to be celebrated as his widow -- indeed, being the widow of Augustus, as well as the priestess of the cult established to worship him as a new Roman god, was as politically significant to Livia's public image as was her role as the mother of the new emperor, Tiberius.¹¹ In the literary sources, Tiberius is portrayed as reluctant to capitalise on his mother's popular public image, preferring to emphasise his adoption by Augustus as his primary dynastic claim to the empire; Dio, Suetonius and Tacitus all emphasise a rift between mother and son, citing Tiberius' resentment of Livia's prominent position and his deliberate refusals to present her with public honours both before and after her death.¹² Livia's new role as widow and priestess of Divus Augustus is a strong feature of her portrayal in Dio, who tells us that Livia played a full role in the bestowing of honours on the dead Augustus, that it was she who placed his bones in his mausoleum, that as priestess of Divus Augustus she took it upon herself to reward those who claimed to have seen Augustus' soul on the way to heaven, and that she and Tiberius were jointly responsible for the temple built in honour of Augustus, and for the decrees passed to honour Augustus upon his death.¹³ Livia continued to be seen as the representative of Augustus, as when there was a fire near the temple of the Vestals in 16 CE and she took command of the situation, directing the soldiers and populace personally as if she were still the emperor's wife; Suetonius cites this as an example of why Tiberius saw Livia as a threat to his own power.¹⁴ This personal interpretation of Tiberius' relationship to his mother, however, omits the very significant fact that as the mother of the emperor, Livia's public image and status reflected on him, and her close connection with Augustus served to promote and support Tiberius' own imperial status.

¹¹ See pages 232-235 of this thesis.

¹² Dio 57.3.3, 57.12.1-57.12.6, 58.2.1-58.2.6; Suet. *Tib.* 50.2-50.3, 51.1-51.2; Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.1-1.14.4, 5.2.1-5.2.2.

¹³ Dio 56.17.1, 56.42.4, 56.46, 56.47.1.

¹⁴ Suet. *Tib.* 50.

The title of Augusta will forever be associated with Livia, as she was the first woman to possess that name. As Barrett observes, Augustus was never the personal name of the first *princeps* but one of his titles; by adopting Livia as a Julia as well as an Augusta he implied that only the Julian family was worthy of that title, while at the same time making the unprecedented move of transferring an honorific title from a man to a woman.¹⁵ Perkounig also subscribes to the theory that the adoption of Livia, as well as that of Tiberius, was a way of keeping all power (or appearance of power) within the Julian family, rather than allowing it to be shared with the Claudian name.¹⁶ The title Augusta was by no means a feminine equivalent to Augustus in anything other than grammatical terms; there is no evidence that the title conveyed or even implied constitutional power, except that which was passed on to the children of the Augusta. This goes a long way towards explaining why Tiberius, who refused many honours on behalf of his mother during his reign, did not prevent this particular title from being awarded to Livia. Her posthumous adoption made him a Julian through both lines of descent, as he had already been adopted into that *gens*. The presentation of the title Augusta added further weight to his imperial legitimacy, making him an Augustan on both sides, the first official son of an Augusta.¹⁷

What did it mean to be an Augusta or the son of an Augusta? The only implications of the title in those early days were the strong links it forged between Augustus the father, Augusta the mother and Tiberius the son, supporting Tiberius' role as the first

¹⁵ Barrett, *Livia*, p. 151.

¹⁶ Perkounig, *Livia Drusilla – Iulia Augusta*, p. 77.

¹⁷ Perkounig, *Livia Drusilla – Iulia Augusta*, p. 77.

dynastic successor of the principate.¹⁸ The emphasis on Tiberius' role as an Augustus who was son of Augustus and Augusta can also be seen in contemporary inscriptions such as *C[aesari Divi Aug. f. Augusto... Divae Augus[tae]*.¹⁹

The emperor Gaius, better known as Caligula, chose to capitalise on Livia's reputation of Livia by presenting the title Augusta to his grandmother, Antonia. Since Livia's death in 29 CE during the reign of Tiberius, Antonia (niece of Augustus and daughter-in-law of Livia) had become the most senior woman in the imperial family and was, accordingly, awarded various honours by Caligula in the early days of his reign.²⁰ Both of the new emperor's parents, Germanicus and Agrippina, had predeceased his reign as had his three other grandparents, Agrippa, Julia and Drusus. Antonia was the last living reminder of Caligula's heritage and his position on the complicated Julio-Claudian family tree. Just as Livia had bridged the divide between the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, reassuring the public that the new ruler had truly inherited the *imperium* of the old, Antonia was living evidence of Caligula's connection to both Tiberius and Augustus. In many ways, Antonia, who had once shared a household with her beloved mother-in-law, was the new Livia, and Caligula produced an official name to proclaim that fact to the world: Augusta. No longer disguised through testamentary adoption, *Augusta* was now presented for what it was: an honorific title specific to women of the imperial family, that served to legitimise the imperial claim of the children (and in this case, grandchildren) of the woman in question, and to mark her out as a mother/ancestress of emperors and future emperors.

¹⁸ As emphasised particularly in inscriptional evidence eg. *CIL* 11.1165: Velleia; *ILS* 121 (*EJ* 126): Malta (Gaulos); *CIL* 2.2038: Anticaria, Baetica. For a full listing of the body of inscriptions referring to Livia see Barrett, *Livia* pp. 266-294.

¹⁹ *CIL* 10.6309: Suara, Tarracina. "Augustus, son of the divine Augustus and divine Augusta."

²⁰ Suet. *Gai.* 15.2; Dio 59.3.4.

The title Augusta appears to have been originally bestowed upon Livia in commemoration of her exalted status as *materfamilias* or, at least, senior woman of the imperial family. It seems just as likely that bestowing the same title upon Antonia represented an intention to pass that status on to her successor; to honour Antonia by publicly declaring that she now stood in the place of Livia. As the title developed, it became invested with the status and reputations of every woman who had been associated with it, so that every new Augusta was imbued with the positive connotations that had surrounded the previous Augustae. Despite the generally bad reputation of many of the Julio-Claudian imperial women as portrayed in the texts written by historians such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Dio, the name of Augusta did not suffer accordingly, and continued to represent the apex of honours given to imperial women; indeed, as shall be demonstrated throughout this thesis, the public images of Livia and Agrippina had a strong influence on the way that later imperial women were portrayed in public art and familial propaganda.

While Caligula is said to have bestowed every honour upon Antonia that Livia had received in her lifetime, promoting Antonia into Livia's place as a senior maternal figure to the emperor, Antonia actually makes little appearance in his imperial propaganda.²¹ This may be because Caligula turned against her, or it may simply be that her death so early in his reign rendered Antonia less relevant to his propaganda programme. Caligula's mother Agrippina Major, through whom he was descended directly from Augustus, was a far more significant maternal ghost to exploit. The result of which is that, even if Antonia first received the title as a grandmother (and

²¹ Suet. *Gaius* 15.

mother-substitute), her Augusta imagery and honours were presented to the public posthumously, by her actual son.

There is also a question as to whether or not Antonia actually refused the title Augusta. In his biography of the emperor Claudius, Suetonius mentions that among the many posthumous honours bestowed upon Antonia by her son Claudius was the title Augusta, an honour which she had refused during her lifetime; however, no mention of the title Augusta or such a refusal is made in his work on Caligula.²² While it is entirely possible that Antonia could have refused the title - and it would by no means be the only example of the title being refused by the recipient or by the emperor on her behalf - it must be asked why Antonia would only refuse the title Augusta, if it was offered along with so many other significant honours, including a priesthood of Divus Augustus, and the privileges accorded to the Vestals.²³ Augusta was a new title with no weighty significance other than a strong association with Augustus and Livia, and Antonia already had that association by accepting the priesthood of Augustus, not to mention her personal history as Livia's friend and daughter-in-law. *Augusta* did not have enough history and status for it to be the one honour worth refusing on the ground of personal modesty. Moreover, refusing to be named Augusta would annoy the new emperor, and he certainly could prevent her from refusing it if he so chose. It is more likely that the story of her refusal was invented to explain why the next emperor, Claudius, felt it was necessary to repeat the honour posthumously. As Kokkinos notes, there is some epigraphical and numismatic evidence to support the idea that Antonia was referred to as Augusta during the reign of Caligula, on a partial marble inscription and two coin types found

²² Suet. *Gaius* 15, *Claud.* 11.

²³ Dio 59.4. For later examples of the title being refused by the recipient or the emperor on her behalf, see pages 33, (Messalina) 56, 109-110, (Plotina/Marciana) 71 (Titiana).

in Corinth dated to 37 CE, and inscriptions in Rome in 38 and 39 CE.²⁴ Only one of the Roman inscriptions, however, actually has the name Antonia Augusta as part of the surviving (rather than interpreted) text. Temporini argues that the inscriptional evidence does not support Antonia as an Augusta during the reign of Caligula, citing in particular the death notice inscribed to Antonia in the *Fasti* of Ostia, which does not include the title Augusta.²⁵

Kokkinos elaborates on the ambiguity surrounding Antonia's association with the name Augusta during her lifetime. He notes that Suetonius' apparent reference to Antonia having declined the title during her lifetime is based on an emendation by Lipsius from the confusing *et cognomen Augustae ab avia recusatum* ("the name Augusta which had been declined by his grandmother") to the more sensible *ab viva recusatum* ("which she had declined in her lifetime").²⁶ Kokkinos does not challenge the propriety of this emendation (after all, Claudius' grandmother Livia certainly did not refuse the title Augusta, and there is no suggestion that it was ever even considered for his other grandmother, Octavia) but uses it as an opportunity to examine the statement more carefully.²⁷ Kokkinos comments upon the unlikelihood that Antonia would have been given an opportunity to refuse the particular honour, supposing she was given any notice of it at all, and notes that Caligula is said to have left Rome immediately after Tiberius' funeral to fetch the ashes of his mother and brother, leaving perhaps two weeks between his return and Antonia's suicide on 1 May.²⁸ Such timing certainly allows Antonia little room to refuse the title Augusta. Kokkinos suggests that it was Tiberius who had offered Antonia the title Augusta

²⁴ *CIL* 6.2028c, 6.32346e, 8.2.17; Kokkinos p. 35, p. 46.

²⁵ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, pp. 28-29.

²⁶ Suet. *Claud.* 11.12; Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 255.

²⁷ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 255.

²⁸ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 256.

after the death of Livia, and that she had refused it on that occasion. Caligula's presentation to her of the title Augusta, then, would have been with the foreknowledge that he was not respecting her personal wishes.²⁹

The theory is very persuasive, as it explains why the title would have seemed distasteful to Antonia (being offered her beloved mother in law's title upon the occasion of her death is less than tactful) and it would appear to fit in with Caligula's character to heap unwanted honours on his grandmother. However, Kokkinos' main justification for the theory is a concern that "for some unexplained reason, the established position of Augusta was allowed to remain vacant in the crucial period between 29-37 [CE]."³⁰ The title Augusta was not consistently established throughout the Julio-Claudian dynasty at all, and it is an extraordinary claim that its meaning and significance had been fully established with only Livia's ownership of the title. There is little sense of the title Augusta becoming a necessary part of the imperial nomenclature, passed on from woman to woman, until the second century CE, when periods without a living Augusta are far more unusual. It is also significant that the only evidence for Kokkinos' theory is his equally unsupported theory that the *Salus Augusta* coins long thought to represent Livia are actually representations of Antonia.³¹ However tempting the Tiberius theory is, it seems far more credible to assume that Caligula was the first to present the title to Antonia, and that Claudius felt it necessary to reissue it as a posthumous title to Antonia during his own reign in order that he, as Antonia's son, receive the kudos for giving her the honour. There is certainly no contradiction in allowing for both Caligula and Claudius to have bestowed the title upon her, as they both had their own specific

²⁹ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, pp. 255-6.

³⁰ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 257.

³¹ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, pp. 91-93, pp. 256-257.

reasons for wishing to do so.

Further evidence that the title Augusta had not yet developed the political (and dynastic) significance it was to hold in later years, and that it was perhaps only of slight interest to Caligula, is that he does not present the name to any of the other women of his family. Since the title Augusta was so closely associated with the mother of Tiberius, it is particularly significant that Caligula did not offer it posthumously to his own mother, Agrippina Major, who was a vital figure in the imperial *domus*. Not only a grand-daughter to Augustus, Agrippina had been married to Tiberius' first heir Germanicus and if not for his untimely death would have been wife of the third emperor of Rome – literally the next Livia. Like her mother-in-law, Antonia, as well as Livia herself, Agrippina Major was represented publicly as the ideal wife and mother; indeed she can be seen as a more successful mother than either of them due to her extraordinary fertility, bringing three sons and three daughters into the imperial family and yet remaining a model of chastity and purity in the public eye, something that neither her equally fertile mother Julia nor her sister Julia (both having been exiled for scandalous behaviour) had managed to achieve. The death of her husband hit Agrippina badly, however, and she spoke out against the Tiberian regime, accusing the emperor and his mother of all manner of crimes. She died in political exile, long before her own son Caligula was named as Tiberius' heir.³²

With Caligula as emperor, Agrippina Major's reputation was publicly rehabilitated. Caligula's father was descended from both the Julians and Claudians, but it was

³² Tac. *Ann.* 6.25.

through Agrippina that Caligula was directly descended from Augustus himself, and therefore it was important that the public be reminded of who his mother was. Coins of the Roman mint were released in belated memorial to Agrippina between 37 and 41 CE, including a coin type with Agrippina's draped bust on the obverse and a *carpentum* drawn by two mules on the reverse with the legend *S.P.Q.R. Memoriae Agrippinae*.³³ No specific honours, however, were posthumously awarded to Agrippina Major. It has been suggested that Caligula intended to deify both his parents, but his beloved sister Drusilla's early death distracted him from this intention, so that he presented that honour to her instead of their mother or their great-grandmother Livia.³⁴ In any case, there is no evidence that Caligula thought of making his mother an Augusta; thus far, the title had only been bestowed upon living women. After the death of Antonia, there were no senior women left in Caligula's imperial *domus*, and he showed little inclination to present the title Augusta to any women of his own generation. Caligula had three wives throughout the course of his reign -- Livia Orestilla, Lolliia Paulina and Milonia Caesonia -- and none of them featured in his propaganda in any significant way.³⁵ Caesonia was the most prominent of the three since she had borne his child, but even her role was quite small, and Caligula refused her the honour of being called his wife until the birth of that child.³⁶

Caligula's sisters fared rather better as far as public image is concerned, appearing in statuary and on the reverse of a sestertius type from one of the earliest issues of

³³ **Figure 17**; *RIC I Tiberius* 21, *Caligula* 42; *BMC I Caligula* 81-87; for further discussion on the *carpentum* and the significance of this to the public image of Livia and that of other Augustae, see pages 243-246 of this thesis.

³⁴ Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 209.

³⁵ *PIR² Cornelia Orestina* 1492, *Lolliia Paulina* 328, *Milonia Caesonia* 590.

³⁶ Suet. *Gaius* 25.

Caligula's reign, which celebrates the three sisters as the divine personifications of Securitas, Concordia and Fortuna.³⁷ The central positioning of Drusilla on this coin and the gestures of the flanking figures of her two sisters make it clear that Drusilla is intended to be the most prominent of the three.³⁸ This supports Suetonius' literary portrayal of Drusilla as Caligula's favourite sister and the most important female figure of his reign; behaving towards her as if she were his legal wife; Josephus and Dio also supported the incest story, which is sometimes carried through to include a sexual relationship between Caligula and all three of his sisters.³⁹ Ginsburg discusses the incest myths (and other accusations of sexual impropriety) surrounding Caligula at length, noting the absence of references to such rumours in Tacitus and other sources, and suggesting that incest myths are part of the standard invective against tyrants, and should be regarded with due caution and criticism.⁴⁰

The three sisters were given all the privileges of the Vestal Virgins, as had Livia and Antonia before them; these privileges included financial independence, attendance by a lictor, and special seats at the theatre.⁴¹ In both Livia and Antonia's case, however, these honours were presented at the same time that they were made priestesses of the divine Augustus, whereas there is no evidence to suggest that any of Caligula's sisters was given priestly duties during this period. The names of Caligula's sisters were also included not only in the annual vows taken for the emperor's wellbeing, but also in the vow of allegiance taken to the emperor, an honour which had previously only been awarded to Livia and Sejanus, and which the

³⁷ **Figure 16;** *RIC I Caligula* 26; *BMC I Caligula* 36-37.

³⁸ Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art*, p. 78.

³⁹ Suet. *Gaius* 24; Jos. AJ 19.204; Dio 59.3.6, 59.11.1, 59.26.5.

⁴⁰ Ginsburg, *Representing Agrippina*, p. 12.

⁴¹ Dio 59.3.4.

senate had prohibited from ever being offered again after Sejanus' disgrace.⁴²

The question of whether Drusilla was actually given the title of Augusta has been debated; it has often been assumed so because Dio tells us that Drusilla was voted "all the honours that had been bestowed upon Livia," upon her death.⁴³ Temporini first questioned this assumption by pointing out the absence of the title Augusta in the inscriptions to Diva Drusilla.⁴⁴ The lack of specific reference to the title Augusta in relation to Drusilla in the literary sources is also notable, since Suetonius, Tacitus and Dio all commonly referred to the creation of a new Augusta.⁴⁵ Also, in the various instances when the sources refer to women receiving "all the honours awarded to Livia" they naturally do not include her adoption into the Julian family by Augustus and therefore may also exclude her simultaneous name change to Julia Augusta. The lack of appropriate evidence therefore suggests that Drusilla was not awarded the title either before or after her death. At this stage, Augusta can still be seen as a title for mature, maternal figures of the imperial family, which simply did not fit with the public image of Drusilla. Its use as a posthumous symbol of honour was not established until the reign of Claudius, leaving Agrippina Major and her daughter Drusilla as notable non-Augustae of the Julio-Claudian period.

When Claudius unexpectedly inherited the empire after the assassination of Caligula, he was lavish in the honours that he bestowed upon his female relatives, particularly those who were no longer living. Livia, wife of the deified Augustus, mother of

⁴² Dio 57.3.2, 58.2.8, 58.12.2, 58.12.6, 59.3.4, 59.9.2; Suet. *Div. Jul.* 80.2, *Aug.* 58.2, *Tib.* 51.1, *Gaius* 15.3; Tac. *Ann.* 1.7.3.

⁴³ Dio 59.11.2.

⁴⁴ *PIR² Iulia Drusilla* 664; Temporini, *Die Frauen*, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁵ e.g. Suet. *Claud.* 11.12 (Antonia), Tac. *Ann.* 12.26; Dio 61.33.2. (Agrippina) Suet. *Nero* 35; Tac. *Ann.* 15.23 (Poppaea & Claudia).

Tiberius, great-grandmother of Caligula and grandmother of Claudius, was finally allowed to join her husband as a *diva*⁴⁶. While she was not the first Roman woman to have been honoured thus, Livia's cult had greater longevity than Drusilla's, which had not been invested with enough momentum to continue beyond Caligula's death.⁴⁷

Claudius also went to great lengths to arrange posthumous celebrations for his late mother Antonia, holding games on her birthday, parading her portrait in a carriage around the Circus Maximus and, most significantly, presenting Augusta to her as an honorific title for the second time.⁴⁸ Whether or not Antonia accepted the title of Augusta the first time it was offered to her, it is obvious why Claudius was so keen to be seen to be the one to honour his mother thus. He had never been taken seriously as a member of the imperial family and was the first emperor to inherit the empire without having been adopted by his predecessor; just as deifying Livia reminded Rome that Claudius was her grandson, honouring Antonia reminded them that he was the great-nephew of Augustus. Because of the anti-Caligulan feeling in the populace, as well as the disturbingly violent way in which Caligula had been removed from power, Claudius was the first Roman emperor who needed to actively disassociate himself from the reign of his predecessor, while still emphasising other family connections, particularly those of the Julians.⁴⁹

Claudius' first imperial wife, Valeria Messalina, was never granted the title Augusta.

⁴⁶ Suet. *Claud.* 11.3; Dio 60.5.2.

⁴⁷ Grether, "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult," pp. 251-252; Wood, "Diva Drusilla Panthea," p. 465; Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 56-60. See chapter 5 for further discussion on the cult of Livia and those of the other deified Augustae.

⁴⁸ Suet. *Gaius* 11.2; Dio 60.5.1.

⁴⁹ Suet. *Claud.* 11.

According to Dio, the senate proposed that she be awarded that particular honour upon the birth of her son Britannicus, but Claudius refused it on her behalf.⁵⁰ This is the second example of the title Augusta allegedly being when offered to a living person; while still a relatively new invention, the implication here is that the title carried such a high honour that only the most senior and elite women of the Julian family should be eligible to receive it. The title Augusta certainly became more weighted with significance with the deification of Livia. Despite the formality evidence from the process involved in bestowing the title Augusta, (requiring the involvement of the senate as well as the emperor), the exact meaning of the title is still not officially or legally clarified in any way, and it is only through analysis of the associated connotations that we can gather any idea of what it truly meant to be an Augusta. Clearly, Claudius intended the title to hold the meaning implied by its association with Livia and Antonia only; that the Augusta was a senior ancestress of the emperor, a beloved and wise maternal figure. At this time, the idea of Augusta being associated with the wives of emperors was yet to be established; indeed, there is little in the way of any official status for the wife of an emperor. The intention may have been for Messalina to become an Augusta when her own son became *princeps*, assuming that she outlived Claudius; following that theoretical line, Antonia may well have been intended for deification at that time, following the pattern set in relation to her predecessor Livia. The omission of Messalina from the ranks of the Augusta makes it clear that bearing the child of an emperor did not automatically qualify one to hold the title; though clearly the senate believed that this was the case. It is clear that while the title Augusta was at this time an important element in promoting the emperor's pietas in regard to the elder women of his

⁵⁰ Dio 12.5.

family, it had not yet taken on the associations it would have in regards to the mother of imperial heirs. Ironically, it was Claudius' next wife who would associate the title Augusta with the role of mother to the future emperor.

Wood suggests that Claudius' restraint in not allowing his mother Antonia to join Livia as a *diva* was part of his overall strategy to avoid appearing extravagant.⁵¹ It was Livia whose deification was so obviously overdue; Antonia may not have had the same level of public support as the first Augusta. Also, the consecration of Livia placed her alongside her husband Divus Augustus, allowing Claudius to also gain the credit for enhancing the posthumous image of his most prominent predecessor. The overall result of Claudius's various choices as to which honours to award and not award was a hierarchy of imperial women: Claudius' wife was allowed various public honours but not the title Augusta, while his mother was an Augusta but not a goddess, and his grandmother was both an Augusta and a goddess. This apparent a hierarchy in the representation of imperial women is distinct from the way that prominent women were presented during the Augustan age, when the emperor was careful not to raise one of his female relatives (whether his sister, wife, daughter or niece) above the others, preferring instead to display them and honour them in pairs or small groups.⁵² There was of course less political danger in raising specific women to exalted status after their deaths, but from the time of Claudius, it becomes clear that imperial women, like the imperial men, varied greatly in status, the title of Augusta being just one way in which female status was established.

⁵¹ Wood, *Imperial Women* p. 176.

⁵² As with the honours of *sacrosanctitas*, financial independence and the right to be portrayed in statues, given simultaneously to Livia and Octavia. Dio 49.38.1; Purcell, "Livia and the Womanhood," p. 86, p. 95.

It seems likely that Claudius originally intended the title Augusta to continue its role as an honour for senior maternal figures only, but this changed after Messalina's disgrace and death. Faced with a list of potential wives, Claudius chose his own niece, Agrippina Minor, daughter of Agrippina Major and Germanicus, and sister of Caligula, to take Messalina's place. For the first time, a Roman *princeps* had married a woman who was not only of imperial Julian blood, but was directly descended from Augustus; indeed, since Agrippina was the great-granddaughter of Augustus, and Claudius only a great-nephew, Agrippina had better imperial blood than her new husband. As Corbier suggests, imperial legitimacy at this time was still very concerned with descent from Augustus, the founder of the imperial *domus*, which was just as, if not more, significant than a relationship to the current emperor.⁵³ This is particularly relevant when we see that Claudius chooses Agrippina's son over his own to be his heir; Britannicus was descended from Augustus' sister Octavia on both sides and from Livia, but Nero was directly descended from Augustus, making him a more politically significant heir.

Livia herself had never held as strong a position as Agrippina did during her marriage to Claudius. Agrippina received various public honours including the name Augusta, this being the first time that an Augusta was also an imperial wife (Livia only having held the title as an imperial widow and mother). It is from this point that the modern concept of "empress" begins to take shape, this being an imperial wife who unashamedly shares in her husband's imperial majesty. In her thirties, Agrippina was by far the youngest woman to have held this title. She was still a mother, however, preserving the idea that the title had a maternal significance.

⁵³ Corbier, "Male power and legitimacy," p. 179.

Tacitus tells us that Agrippina became Augusta at the time of Claudius' adoption of Agrippina's son Nero, while Dio places the presentation of the title before that event, and suggests that Agrippina personally manipulated the senate to bestow various honours upon herself including the right to ride in a *carpentum* and to be attended by two lictors.⁵⁴ The various honours Agrippina attracted during her marriage to Claudius may certainly have invested Nero with higher status and made it easier for him to be accepted as the emperor's heir. Temporini emphasises the significant juxtaposition of Agrippina receiving the title Augusta, and the adoption of her son, and in particular the way that both of these honours bound Claudius and Nero together.⁵⁵

That Agrippina received the title Augusta during her husband's reign rather than her son's is confirmed by the various coin issues from 50 CE which celebrate Agrippina Augusta as the wife of Claudius, making her the first living Roman imperial wife to have her portrait and name on the official coinage of the imperial state; that is, to appear entirely as herself, with no doubt as to her specific identity.⁵⁶ It is significant that Agrippina appears on the same coins as her husband, making her the first imperial wife to be thus represented as sharing her husband's public image of imperial majesty on coins from the state mint of Rome.⁵⁷ Agrippina also appears on various coins of the provincial mint of Asia Minor, both on the reverse of coins dedicated to Claudius, and in one unusual instance, with her face sharing the same coin side as her husband, his face overlapping hers.⁵⁸ A further numismatic innovation came with the representation of Nero as *princeps iuventutis*, "prince of

⁵⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 12.26; Dio 61.33.2.

⁵⁵ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p.30.

⁵⁶ **Figure 20**; *BMC I Claudius* 72-78; Mattingly, *BMC. I cliv.*

⁵⁷ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, pp. 30-21; Barrett, *Agrippina*, p. 109.

⁵⁸ *BMC I Claudius* 231-235.

youth” and the designated successor of Claudius on the reverse of coins that depicted Agrippina on the obverse.⁵⁹ The only precedent for this celebration of the mother of the next emperor was the Augustan coin depicting his daughter Julia alongside her two sons, Gaius and Lucius, whom Augustus had recently adopted; in that instance, however, the heirs and their mother appeared on the reverse of coins primarily dedicated to Augustus.⁶⁰ In the case of the Agrippina-Nero coins of Claudius’ reign, Claudius himself is notable by his absence, his relationship to his wife and heir not even referred to in the legends.⁶¹

Dio tells us that Agrippina received all the privileges Livia had enjoyed, implying that this was during her role as wife of Claudius rather than later (or earlier) in her public career.⁶² However, many of the priestly privileges associated with Livia had previously been awarded to Agrippina as the sister of Caligula, and it seems unlikely that the priesthood of Augustus was included in the honours awarded to Agrippina during the reigns of Caligula or Claudius, as we have no independent evidence that she served in such a role; as Tacitus notes, Agrippina was made priestess of the deified Claudius after her husband’s death, and was attended at that time by two lictors.⁶³ Honours that had been specifically refused to Messalina were certainly not considered too good for the daughter of Germanicus. The distinction between the public images of these two women is certainly made clear by the surviving epigraphical evidence from the East: almost all of Messalina’s inscriptions herald her only as *Sebastê*, wife of the emperor, while Agrippina has more than three times as many extant inscriptions, the majority of which give her the epithet *thêa* (goddess) as

⁵⁹ *BMC I Claudius* 82-83.

⁶⁰ *BMC I Augustus* 106, 108.

⁶¹ *BMC I Claudius* 82-83.

⁶² Dio 61.12.

⁶³ Tac. *Ann.* 13.2.

well as *Sebastê*.⁶⁴ As an imperial wife, and mother of the emperor's heir, Agrippina Augusta soon had an unprecedented level of public imagery and recognition. She was included in the daily ritual of *salutatio*, so that now when the courtiers and clients paid homage to their emperor, they also paid homage to Agrippina.⁶⁵ According to one particular anecdote of Tacitus, a British captive chieftain paid equal homage to Claudius and his wife, once Claudius had pardoned him:

atque illi vinclis absoluti Agrippinam quoque, haud procul alio suggestu conspicuam, isdem quibus principem laudibus gratibusque venerati sunt. novum sane et moribus veterum insolitum, feminam signis Romanis praesidere: ipsa semet parti a maioribus suis imperii sociam ferebat.⁶⁶

And released from their bonds, using the same words of praise and gratitude, they paid homage also to Agrippina, who sat conspicuously close on another throne. That a woman should sit before Roman standards was an unprecedented novelty, foreign to ancient tradition: she was asserting her partnership in the empire won by her ancestors.

The identification of the title Augusta with Agrippina and the way in which she used it to support her public image altered the meaning of the name significantly, investing it with new implications that were to remain associated with *Augusta* for centuries; no longer meaning, as it had for Antonia, "senior woman of the emperor's family," the name was now tied for the first time to the imperial wife, and implied something nearer to *princeps femina*: that is, the most prominent and powerful

⁶⁴ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 345-354.

⁶⁵ Dio 61.33.1; Barrett, *Agrippina*, pp. 108-109.

⁶⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 12.37.

woman of the imperial family. Agrippina was no mere emperor's wife as Caligula's brides and Messalina had been: she was an imperial consort in the manner of Livia. When Claudius died and Nero inherited the principate, it is not surprising that Agrippina rose in status accordingly, gaining even more public power and prominence as the mother of Nero, a seventeen-year old emperor. Like Livia, Agrippina Augusta had the benefit of being not only the widow of one emperor and mother of the next; with the deification of Claudius she became the wife of a god.

Two other women of Claudius' household are worth mentioning here: his daughters Claudia Antonia and Claudia Octavia. Like many of the other women of the Julio-Claudian imperial households (including their respective mothers), Antonia and Octavia were not singled out for the honour of the title Augusta; given that Agrippina in her mid-thirties was still the youngest ever woman to receive this name, this is hardly surprising, although it is significant that Octavia was married to Nero when he became emperor, and still received no public honours. Like the wives of Caligula, Octavia was never given an official role in the imperial propaganda; even under her father's reign she and her sister do not appear on the state coinage, although they do appear on coins from provincial mints, sometimes along with their brother Britannicus.⁶⁷ Wood reviews the surviving evidence of Octavia's portraiture, under the assumption that a wife of an emperor must necessarily have appeared on some public monuments, and notes that some provincial coins gave her the title of *Sebaste* despite her lack of the title Augusta.⁶⁸ While Octavia's public image was neglected during the reign of her husband, who showed no interest in her beyond the legitimacy he had gained by being the son-in-law of Claudius, she was greatly beloved by the

⁶⁷ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 347-8; Wood, *Imperial Women* p. 282.

⁶⁸ Wood, "The Incredible, Vanishing Wives of Nero," p. 6.

people. There were protests in the streets when Nero attempted to divorce her for barrenness, and he eventually had to accuse her of adultery, prostitution and abortion in order to have her exiled, and then executed.⁶⁹ After the death of his second wife Poppaea, Nero attempted to recreate the popularity he had gained by his marriage to Octavia by proposing to her widowed elder sister Claudia Antonia, the only surviving female member of the Julio-Claudian family.⁷⁰ Antonia refused him and was promptly executed.⁷¹

Eck uses Octavia as an example of the limitations of the literary sources in regards with certain historical women, observing that some sources portray Octavia as a victim and others as a heroine, and that it is difficult to reconcile the sources in order to construct an “accurate” picture of the woman.⁷² This serves as a vivid example of the way that modern scholarship of Ancient Rome is still powerfully driven by the perspectives of the ancient scholars, for whom every historical “character” must be noble or tyrannical, modest or ambitious, victim or hero. Such obsessing over extremes of behaviour is by no means limited to the representation of women, but is particularly relevant to women because the sources concerning them are so much scarcer, and they are thus even more likely to end up categorised as merely good or wicked characters, with no attempt made to look at their lives or public image in any greater detail than that.

When Nero’s reign began, it was his mother Agrippina Augusta rather than his wife Octavia, who was the *princeps femina*: she appeared on the coinage, stood at her

⁶⁹ Suet. *Nero* 35; Tac. *Ann.* 14.59-14.64.

⁷⁰ Corbier, “Male power and legitimacy,” p. 187.

⁷¹ Suet. *Nero* 35.

⁷² Eck, “Die iulisch-claudische Familie,” p. 104.

son's side at public events and received many honours.⁷³ As with Livia under Tiberius, however, Agrippina soon found that her son resented her prominence; in both cases, the son had gained an extra measure of imperial legitimacy via his mother, and disliked any reference to this fact once his position as *princeps* was fully established. While Nero's propaganda tied him closely to both of his imperial parents in the early days of his reign, as demonstrated by inscriptions in the Acts of the Arval Brethren in 50-54 CE, describing Nero as the *suboles* of Agrippina Augusta and *filius* of Claudius, he soon became comfortable enough in his position to openly distance himself from the reign of Claudius, a move which threatened his mother's public status.⁷⁴ Further evidence of Agrippina becoming less relevant to Nero's propaganda programme is shown by her absence from coins after 55 CE.⁷⁵

While the majority of primary sources support the theory that Nero arranged for his mother to be murdered, they are divided as to his reaction to her death. According to Tacitus, Nero immediately launched a full-scale attack on the Claudian regime, blaming Agrippina for every wrongdoing and scandal of that period and accusing his mother of conspiring against him.⁷⁶ Her death, therefore, was marked by thanksgivings and supplications for Nero's safety, the declaration of annual games for the festival of Minerva, the day on which the conspiracy had been exposed, and the inclusion of Agrippina Augusta's birthday among the *dies nefasti*. According to Dio, however, popular opinion was quick to accuse Nero of murdering his mother, and he went out of his way to publicly mourn her, offering sacrifices and a

⁷³ Tac. *Ann.* 13.2.

⁷⁴ Corbier, "Male power and legitimacy," p. 186.

⁷⁵ Kleiner, "Family Ties," p. 50.

⁷⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 14.11.

magnificent theatrical festival in her honour.⁷⁷ Suetonius states that Nero was congratulated on his mother's death by the army, the senate and the populace, but also that Nero admitted to being hounded by the Furies for matricide, and that he hired Persian magi to conjure up Agrippina's ghost and entreat her forgiveness.⁷⁸

Agrippina was the youngest woman so far to receive the title of Augusta, but her ongoing public career imbued the title with similar maternal connotations to those it had acquired from its association with Livia and Antonia. Agrippina may have received the title during her time as imperial wife, but the title was presented to her so closely to the adoption of her son that the maternal aspect of the title is preserved. The title Augusta promoted and supported not only Agrippina's public image, but Nero's public image as heir as well as emperor. As Eck observes, it was Agrippina who ensured such a smooth transition of power between Claudius and Nero.⁷⁹

Nero's first wife Octavia never received the title of Augusta, and yet it was bestowed upon his second wife Poppaea upon the birth of their first child, a daughter, in 63 CE. With characteristic Neronian excess, the baby girl was honoured in the same way, being named Claudia Augusta.⁸⁰ It is not clear from the sources whether this is the first instance of a baby receiving the honorific title Augusta or whether this is the first (and indeed, only) instance of Augusta being used as a birth-name during the Roman empire; the context, however, so close to the bestowal of the title Augusta upon Poppaea, implies the former. Claudius' daughters had their own names (Antonia and Octavia) in addition to the familial "Claudia," but Nero had no other

⁷⁷ Dio 61.16-61.17.

⁷⁸ Suet. *Nero* 34.

⁷⁹ Eck, *Agrippina*, p. 60.

⁸⁰ Suet. *Nero* 35; Tac. *Ann.* 15.23.

children for us to compare his naming habits with. A third alternative may be that Augusta, far from being a name or title bestowed upon the baby Claudia at her birth, was an honour conferred posthumously upon her when she died after a few short months. By Roman custom, she would have been officially named eight days after her birth, but that naming may well have only involved the initial Claudia, with the Augusta added later.⁸¹ This does, however, assume a gross misunderstanding on the part of Dio, who specifically states that the baby received the name/title upon her birth. It is therefore best to put the new Augusta's name down to Neronian excess, and assume that it was indeed bestowed as an honorific title upon the child in celebration of her birth, not her death. However problematic this makes the various theories about what Augusta was supposed to mean at this stage, it must be remembered that the name Augusta still had little in the way of an established history, allowing for new emperors to use it in different ways. Given that baby Claudia was Nero's first and only heir, it is likely that he meant her children ultimately to succeed him, preserving the maternal associations of Augusta as a name for the mothers of Caesars and Augusti. It is also worth noting that with the birth and naming of Claudia, we have for the first time two living Augustae in Rome. This practice was to become something of a common tradition during later reigns.⁸²

The baby Claudia received many other unprecedented honours during her brief life, and Nero was equally extravagant in his mourning programme after her death, declaring his daughter a goddess and providing her with her own shrine and priest.⁸³

⁸¹ PIR² p. 258; Harlow & Laurence, *Growing Up and Growing Old*, p. 39.

⁸² See pages 55-58 (Plotina and Marciana, Plotina and Matidia), 68 (Faustina Minor and Lucilla), 70 (Lucilla and Crispina), 75 (Julia Domna and Plautilla), 77-79 (Julia Maesa and Julia Soaemias with Julia Paula, Aquilia Severa and Annia Faustina, Julia Maesa and Julia Mamaea, Julia Mamaea and Orbiana).

⁸³ Tac. *Ann.* 15.23; Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p.358.

Claudia Augusta is not only the first Roman imperial child to be made Augusta, but is also the first Roman imperial child to be deified; indeed, she is only the third female of the imperial family to be consecrated as a god, preceded only by Drusilla and Livia.⁸⁴ Poppaea herself, who was deified later after her death in 65 CE, was the first of a long line of imperial wives who were deified simply for having been married to an emperor; she had neither Julian nor Claudian blood, by birth or adoption.⁸⁵ Though their deaths were separate, the posthumous representations of these mother and daughter Augustae were intrinsically linked, as is evident from a bronze coin type that places Diva Poppaea on the obverse and Diva Claudia on the reverse.⁸⁶

While none of Nero's other wives was accorded the name of Augusta, Statilia Messalina, whom Nero married in 66 CE, was referred to as a goddess and *sebastê* in an extravagant inscription dedicated by the *demos* and *boule* of Acraephia, in honour of Nero (as "Zeus the Liberator, the single greatest Imperator of our times, friend of the Greeks") after the liberation of Greece; statues of Nero and of Statilia Messalina were to be placed in the temple of Apollo.⁸⁷ There is, however, no evidence that she was officially consecrated in Rome, and likewise there is no evidence that Statilia Messalina was ever offered the status of an Augusta. Neither Augusta nor *sebastê* appears on any of her coin legends, even those from provincial mints.⁸⁸ The name Augusta forms no part of her (sparse) public image except when *sebastê* is translated inaccurately as Augusta the title, rather than *augusta* the word, by modern scholars.

⁸⁴ Price, "From noble funerals to divine cult," p. 87.

⁸⁵ Dio 63.26.3; Tac. *Ann.* 21.

⁸⁶ **Figure 25, Figure 26.**

⁸⁷ *SIG*³ 814 = Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, Cat. 67: Acraephia (Karditza), pp. 136-7.

⁸⁸ Wood, "The Incredible, Vanishing Wives of Nero," p.10.

The deifications of women during the Julio-Claudian period did little to produce an official template for later dynasties to emulate; apart from Claudius' calculated deification of Livia, the female apotheoses of these dynasties are individual events based on whims of their respective instigators, Caligula and Nero. None of the female consecrations bear any similarity to the original *divus* prototypes, Romulus and Augustus, or even to each other.⁸⁹ As Flory notes, little attempt is made to create a coherent rationale for the deification of Drusilla and her sacred role in the future of the imperial family, and the same can be said for Poppaea and Claudia; the very randomness of their extravagant promotions to the status of *divae* makes it impossible to present them as part of a pattern later emulated by the Flavians and Antonines.⁹⁰ The same can be said of the role of the title Augusta at the close of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Precedents had certainly been set; the title held a great deal more meaning at the end of the era than it had held when Augustus posthumously bestowed it upon Livia, but we do not have enough of a pattern to do anything other than speculate as to exactly what kind of honour the name Augusta was intended to convey. There is a strong element of maternal female seniority attached to Augusta due to its association with Livia and Antonia; the implication that an Augusta is a mother of emperors and imperial heirs is consistently suggested by this as well as the title being offered to Messalina upon the birth of Britannicus and to Poppaea upon the birth of Claudia. Through Agrippina and Poppaea, the association with wifely as well as maternal virtues are closely promoted by the title, but the overall focus places wifely status firmly below maternity in importance to the Augustae.

Claudia can certainly be seen as an exception to the maternal significance of the title

⁸⁹ Cresswell, *Augusta*, pp. 57-70.

⁹⁰ Flory, "The deification of Roman women," p. 133.

Augusta. However, it is certainly likely that, had she not died so young, Claudia's children would have held some kind of dynastic role, even if Nero had successfully sired male heirs after her. Nevertheless, she was the first woman without proven fertility to be awarded the title, and this was an important precedent for the use of the title under later dynasties.

Vitellius, one of the three emperors who briefly ruled between the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties, was the first non-Julian to make use of the name Augusta, bestowing it upon his mother when he reached Rome as emperor.⁹¹ Here, Augusta is being used as it was for Livia after the death of Augustus, presenting the mother of Vitellius as the *materfamilias* of a new imperial family. This Augusta, whom Suetonius and Tacitus name Sextilia or Sestilia, died during her son's short-lived reign, and we know little about her except that Vitellius evidently felt that being the son of an Augusta was a significant augmentation to his own public image.⁹² The fact that he presents his mother with this title upon first setting foot in the Capitol as emperor suggests that he was aware to some extent of its implications of imperial maternity, and that he wished to make use of these to augment his own status as emperor.⁹³ Vitellius evidently saw great value in being descended from an Augusta, as were Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. Plutarch and Tacitus both refer to Vitellius' wife Galeria, without any suggestion that she received or was even offered the title of Augusta: her mother-in-law received precedence in this matter of female status.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Tac. *Hist.* 2.89.

⁹² *PIR* Sextilia 460; Tac. *Hist.* 2.64; Suet. *Vit.* 3.

⁹³ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p.31.

⁹⁴ Plut. *Otho* 5.2, Tac. *Hist.* 2.64.

The first *princeps* of the new Flavian dynasty, Vespasian, was a widower with two adult sons. Flavia Domitilla, his wife, had died long before her husband's accession to the principate, and therefore was never a part of his public image; indeed, Vespasian's unusual living arrangements with the freedwoman Caenis meant that there was little reference at all to women in his personal propaganda.⁹⁵ The new emperor preferred to emphasise his two healthy sons, Titus and Domitian, as his guarantee of a future Roman dynasty. Domitia Longina, the wife of Vespasian's younger son Domitian, was represented in statuary during her father-in-law's reign, promoting the fact that at least one of the Flavians (themselves an equestrian family) had married into the aristocracy of Rome; Domitia was not, however, honoured with the name Augusta during the reign of Vespasian.⁹⁶ The first Flavian Augusta was in fact a Flavia Domitilla, who was posthumously included in Flavian propaganda upon the succession of Titus, her portrait appearing on the obverse of several imperial coin issues with the inscription *Diva Domitilla Augusta*.⁹⁷ Another series of coins dedicated to Titus on the obverse depict the sacred *carpentum* on the reverse, and the legend *Memoriae Domitillae*.⁹⁸ As the new title demonstrates, Flavia Domitilla was not only honoured as an Augusta, but was also deified. If this Diva Domitilla Augusta is the mother of Titus, then it is possible to read her posthumous promotion in support of the original meaning of Augusta, Domitilla taking the place that Antonia once held as senior ancestress of the emperor.

However, the identity of this first Flavian Augusta is by no means certain.⁹⁹

Vespasian's wife and daughter had exactly the same name and there are scholarly

⁹⁵ Suet. *Vesp.* 3.

⁹⁶ Varner, "Domitia Longina," pp. 189-190.

⁹⁷ *BMC II Titus* 136-138; *RIC II Titus* 70-73.

⁹⁸ *BMC II Titus* 226-228; *RIC II Titus* 153-154.

⁹⁹ *PIR² Flavia Domitilla* 416, *Flavia Domitilla* 417.

arguments for both sides as to which Flavia Domitilla was deified and made Augusta. The “conventional” scholarly consensus is that the deified Flavia Domitilla is in fact Titus’ sister, and there is certainly a reasonable argument to support this, although it is difficult to find any motivation for elevating the younger Domitilla. Given that women received imperial honours primarily in order to reflect upon their children and potential children, there is a clear reason for Flavia Domitilla, the mother of Titus, to be elevated posthumously into the ranks of Augustae as well as becoming the first Flavian *diva*; just as clearly, there is no logical reason why the same should have been done for Flavia Domitilla, the sister, whose children are never publicly promoted as potential imperial heirs.¹⁰⁰

Scott believes that the most conclusive evidence in this matter is a passage from Statius referring to the deification of a *soror* (with no mention of a mother), as well as a physical similarity between the numismatic Diva Domitilla Augusta and her “father,” Vespasian.¹⁰¹ As Cresswell notes, however, the Statius reference is not corroborated either by numismatic evidence or further literary evidence and the “similarity” argument is invalid, as husbands and wives were often portrayed publicly with a physical resemblance to each other.¹⁰² Mattingly acknowledges that some of the coins struck in the name of Domitilla the mother may have been struck in the name of the sister, but believes that the imagery of the *Diva Domitilla Augusta* coins more strongly suggests that they belong to the mother.¹⁰³ A recent biographical study of the Kaiserinnen presented Diva Domitilla Augusta as Titus’ mother without any reference to the controversy, following Mattingly’s line of logic

¹⁰⁰ The most comprehensive discussion of this problem is presented by Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 226-231.

¹⁰¹ Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.94-1.1.98; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 48.

¹⁰² Cresswell, *Augusta*, pp. 226-231.

¹⁰³ *BMC II* xix, lxxv.

if not directly citing him.¹⁰⁴ The Statius reference is certainly unambiguous, but it is problematic to accept a line of poetry so uncritically as a source of information simply because it is the only literary source on the matter.

There is a definite possibility that both sister and mother were consecrated as *divae* and made Augustae, and that some of the coins may belong to one and some to the other. Titus has *Memoriae Domitillae* coins without either the Diva or Augusta title, which may indicate that one of the Domitillas was mourned as a mortal rather than being consecrated as a *diva*, but again, this is not conclusive. Mattingly and Sydenham state that Domitilla is “generally and with reason taken to be the former wife of Vespasian and mother of Titus and Domitian,” and also note that the absence of “*Diva*” from the *Memoriae Domitillae* coin legends is “hardly reason enough” to distinguish her from the deified Domitilla, particularly considering that these coins may have been released before the official consecration.¹⁰⁵

Under Domitian, Diva Domitilla Augusta had less of a public role, although she did appear on at least one undated *aureus* from the mint of Rome, on the reverse of a coin dedicated to Divus Vespasianus.¹⁰⁶ There are precedents for both father-daughter and husband-wife coin pairings of this nature during the Flavian era, but it is worth considering once again what significance Domitian’s dead sister can have possibly had to the propaganda and public image of his reign and dynasty.¹⁰⁷ There was a precedent for deifying a sister, but not for the use of the title Augusta, though we cannot accept perfect continuity of use at this time when the meaning of the title

¹⁰⁴ Castritius, “Frauen,” pp. 170-172.

¹⁰⁵ Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC II*, pp. 114-115.

¹⁰⁶ *BMC II Domitian* 68.

¹⁰⁷ **Figure 35** (Domitian and Domitia, a living husband-wife pairing); *BMC II Domitian* 69 (Divus Titus and Julia Augusta Diva Titi, a post-consecration father-daughter pairing).

was still under development. It may appear that my own preference for Domitilla being the mother of Titus and Domitian has been coloured by the maternal direction of this thesis; however, it is overwhelmingly the case that women of the imperial families are promoted to public honours because of a maternal (and, less often, uxorial) position to contribute to the imperial dynasty. This thesis, will, however, consider both possibilities throughout, where the representation of Flavia Domitilla is relevant.

Cresswell notes also that the question of Flavia Domitilla's identity is the only element of her life and public image that has been explored in any depth; the fact that she is deified raises no eyebrows at all, despite the fact that female deification was by no means a normal or established process under the Julio-Claudian regime.¹⁰⁸

Likewise, it is easy to assume that the presentation of the title Augusta had become an automatic process under the Flavians, while in fact it is still a singular and deliberate political manoeuvre every time it is presented to an imperial woman.

Like his father, Titus had no imperial wife during his reign; he had divorced his second wife before becoming the emperor and famously consorted with the disreputable Jewish Queen Berenice, whose exotic Eastern ways were dangerously reminiscent of Cleopatra.¹⁰⁹ It was Titus' daughter Julia -- usually referred to as Julia Titi by historians for convenience, to distinguish her from the various other Julias -- who was the sole living female to represent Titus' personal household during his reign, appearing on the state coinage as Julia Augusta at the early age of twelve or

¹⁰⁸ Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁹ Suet. *Titus* 7.

thirteen.¹¹⁰ Julia Titi is the first young woman since Nero's baby daughter, Claudia, to be presented with the title in her role as daughter rather than as wife, mother or grandmother of the emperor. The boundaries have once again been expanded; the significance of Augusta altering as it is bestowed upon a different kind of imperial woman. It is unlikely that Titus did not realise that presenting the traditional title of imperial female status to his daughter meant that Rome once more had a Julia Augusta. Wood argues that Julia's image on the imperial coinage is strongly influenced by the portrait type of Livia that first appeared on Roman-minted coins with the inscription *Salus Augusta*.¹¹¹

We must assume that the main reason for promoting Julia Titi so heavily from such a young age was that her children were intended as potential imperial heirs; she was her father's only child, and his brother and heir, Domitian, had no surviving children. The only grandchild of Vespasian who lived to adulthood, Julia's public image continued to be promoted during the reign of her uncle Domitian. She was included both on state coinage and in public vows made for the safety and health of the emperor and his family.¹¹² Her status was increased as the daughter of a god after the deification of Titus, with her new titles on the coinage heralding her as the daughter of divine Titus.¹¹³ Rumour suggested that she was also her uncle's mistress, although this is a less likely reason for her continued public prominence than is the possibility that she might produce heirs.¹¹⁴ Her early death prevented Julia from fulfilling this essential dynastic role, although a botched abortion is one of

¹¹⁰ *BMC II Titus* 139-144, 252-258; *RIC II Titus* 54-58, 177-180.

¹¹¹ **Figure 8, Figure 29**; Wood, *Imperial Women* p. 317.

¹¹² *BMC II Titus* 69; *RIC II Domitian* 216-218a, 231; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 76.

¹¹³ *BMC II Domitian* 250, 258; *RIC II Domitian* 216-216a, 218-218a, 231.

¹¹⁴ Suet. *Dom.* 12.

the (less likely) suggested reasons for her early death.¹¹⁵ Julia Titi was deified by Domitian, and is celebrated on state coinage as *Diva Julia* and *Diva Julia Augusta*, the second goddess of the Flavian family.¹¹⁶ Again the memorial *carpentum* is used in several of these coin issues from the mint of Rome, heralding *Diva Julia Augusta*, daughter of *Divus Titus*.¹¹⁷

Domitia Longina was honoured with the title Augusta very early in her husband Domitian's reign.¹¹⁸ Indeed, from this point onwards, it is difficult to find an important imperial woman who is not made Augusta at some stage in her public life. This need not imply that the title was given automatically to women of the imperial family; in this case, "importance" is often marked by the presentation of the title Augusta, making the argument somewhat circular. After the precedent set by Claudia and Julia Titi, it became more common to present the title to younger female relatives of the emperor, including daughters, nieces and sisters.¹¹⁹ Domitia, however, set a new precedent: the presentation of the title Augusta to an imperial wife upon the occasion of her husband's accession.¹²⁰ She is also the first imperial wife to receive the title without being a mother to a living child.

Domitia appears regularly on coinage of the mint of Rome during her husband's reign, either on the reverse of coins depicting Domitian on the obverse, or on the obverse of coins in her own right, often with her legend *Domitia Augusta* paired with

¹¹⁵ Suet. *Dom.* 12; Wood suggests that this story forms part of the standard invective against tyrants, and thus must be treated with extreme caution. Wood, "The Incredible, Vanishing Wives of Nero," p. 5.

¹¹⁶ *BMC II Domitian* 250, 459-463, 471-473; *RIC II Domitian* 219-220; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 77; Balsdon, *Roman Women*, p. 133; Bickerman, "Diva Augusta Marciana," p. 370.

¹¹⁷ *BMC II Domitian* 471-473; *RIC II Domitian* 400, 411.

¹¹⁸ Suet. *Dom.* 3.

¹¹⁹ See pages 55 (Marciana, sister of Trajana and Matidia, niece of Trajan), 66 (Faustina Minor, daughter of Antoninus Pius) 68 (Lucilla, daughter of Marcus Aurelius).

¹²⁰ Within three weeks of Domitian's accession, according to Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p.32.

her husband's simplified legend *Imp Domit*, or the more comprehensive *Imp Caes Divi F Domitian. Aug.* on the obverse of coins which commemorate Domitia as the mother of the divine Caesar -- a boy child who died in infancy -- on the reverse.¹²¹

The fact that a dead child could posthumously be named a prince and heir of the imperial family is quite significant; it shows that maternity and paternity were both integral aspects of the imperial public image, and reiterates the importance of the Augusta as a mother of Caesars.

The three Flavian Augustae are useful to us in that they represent the three types of women who were generally presented with the title Augusta: mothers of current emperors who received the honour (either living or posthumously) to bolster their imperial son's own public prestige by making him a Son of the Augusta; female relatives of the emperor who were either of child-bearing age or already had children who might potentially play a dynastic role; and the imperial wife, who was presented with a maternal image whether or not she had living children. This pattern can be applied not only to the pre-Flavian Augustae, but to all the women who held that title throughout the succeeding dynasties.

The elderly Nerva was the first emperor of the next, "adoptive" dynasty, and had no feminine component to his propaganda; he adopted Trajan, an adult heir, as his own contribution towards a "dynasty". While adoption of heirs was quite common during the Julio-Claudian reign, this had relied upon the adoption of close male relatives.¹²²

The selection of heirs for this new dynasty was based on talent rather than blood

¹²¹ *BMC II Domitian* 58-68, 501-503.

¹²² e.g. Augustus adopting his grandsons Gaius, Lucius and Agrippa and stepson/son-in-law Tiberius (Suet. *Aug.* 50.1, 65.1), Tiberius adopting his nephew Germanicus (Suet. *Tib.* 15.2), his grandson Tiberius and grandson/great-nephew Caligula (Suet. *Tib.* 66), and Claudius adopting his step-son Nero (Suet. *Claud.* 39.2).

relationship. The emperor Trajan, nevertheless, saw a value in promoting the public image of the women of his family. His wife, Pompeia Plotina, was an imperial wife in the manner of Livia; the similarity of the two is often implied in the public image of Plotina. Like Livia, who during her husband's reign always shared honours with her sister-in-law, Octavia, her stepdaughter, Julia, or her daughter-in-law, Antonia (so as to not raise a single woman into a position of power or status), Plotina is memorably accompanied by Trajan's sister Ulpia Marciana, then Marciana's daughter Salonia Matidia, and later Matidia's daughter Vibia Sabina, who became Plotina's successor as imperial wife after her husband Hadrian was chosen to succeed Trajan.

Plotina and Marciana were both honoured with the title Augusta sometime between 104 and 105 CE in a gesture reminiscent of Augustus, who bestowed sanctity simultaneously upon Livia and Octavia.¹²³ Marciana's daughter Matidia was named Augusta upon the death of her mother, providing Plotina with another equal as companion.¹²⁴ It seems likely that Trajan, whose marriage to Plotina had proven childless, was preparing for the possibility that he might gain a male heir through the descendants of his sister, just as Augustus had originally intended for himself. Little differentiation is made between the public role and status of Plotina and that of Marciana in the literary sources. Pliny, one of our main sources for the description of virtues ascribed to these two women, emphasises the similarity of their roles: indeed, he marvels that two women in the same position can share a *domus* without any appearance of rivalry.¹²⁵ The implication is that Marciana is not simply being included in imperial honours to become an appropriate companion for the emperor's

¹²³ Pliny *Pan.* 84.6; see page 90.

¹²⁴ Bickerman. "Diva Augusta Marciana," pp. 362-365, see also page 57 of this thesis.

¹²⁵ Pliny *Pan.* 84.3.

wife, but that as the emperor's sister she holds a public position equal to that of his wife. They were not only offered the title Augusta at the same time, but both also publicly refused it when it was originally offered to them, a gesture which Pliny claims only made them appear more modest and deserving of the title.¹²⁶ More obviously, it demonstrates that the two women were working in accord, making mutual decisions that affected their shared public image and reputation. Temporini discusses the importance of the imperial title *Pater Patriae* to this original refusal on the part of the Trajanic women, noting that Trajan had not yet received it at the time that Plotina and Marciana were said to have first refused the title of Augusta.¹²⁷

Cresswell's argument that Pliny is deliberately attempting to erode Plotina's "rightful" superior status by placing the two women on the same footing is unconvincing; our modern interpretation of the term "empress" has given a misleading impression of the importance of the imperial wife.¹²⁸ There is no evidence that any emperor's wife during the first century of the Roman principate enjoyed any particular status unless this were particularly desired by her husband. The lack of a formal Latin term for "imperial wife" (other than the title Augusta when appropriate) suggests this, as does the treatment of the various non-Augusta imperial wives of Caligula, Claudius, Nero and Vitellius. There was no automatic process for women to receive public honour, therefore Plotina is losing nothing by holding the same status as Marciana. The literary portrait of Plotina represents her as a woman lacking in political ambition, in clear comparison to the representation of the Julio-Claudian imperial women: Dio, for instance, quotes Plotina as declaring: "I enter here as a woman such as I wish to be when I depart," when she first arrives at

¹²⁶ Pliny *Pan.* 85.8.

¹²⁷ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p.25, p. 32.

¹²⁸ Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 104.

the palace with her husband.¹²⁹

Both Plotina and Marciana were represented on the coinage as Augusta throughout Trajan's reign, although the numismatic evidence suggests that Marciana appeared on coins only after her death and deification, while Plotina was represented on Trajan's state coinage during her lifetime. This does not mean, however, that Plotina was singled out for coins before Marciana; the dating of the various coin examples suggests that Plotina may not have appeared on her own coins until the year in which the coins posthumously honouring Marciana were released. Plotina's most common coin type represents her portrait on the obverse with her own legend and that of her husband, with references to Trajan or goddess images on the reverses; she occasionally appears without reference to her husband, and in at least one instance shares a reverse with Trajan's adoptive father Nerva on a coin primarily dedicated to Trajan.¹³⁰ The majority of Marciana's coinage heralds her as *Diva Augusta Marciana*.¹³¹ Another coin type names her less grandiosely as *Marciana Aug Soror Imp Traiani*.¹³² The latter may have been distributed between her death and deification; that it was released after her death is made clear by the representation on the reverse of her daughter as *Matidia Aug*, given that Matidia only became Augusta after Marciana's death.¹³³

Indeed, according to the *Fasti* at Ostia, Matidia, niece of Trajan, was granted the title of Augusta immediately upon her mother Marciana's deification.¹³⁴ This is a rare

¹²⁹ Dio 68.5.5.

¹³⁰ *BMC III Trajan* 525-530; *RIC II Trajan* 725, 728-741.

¹³¹ *RIC II Trajan* 743-750.

¹³² *BMC III Trajan* 531; *RIC II Trajan* 742.

¹³³ Seelentag, *Taten und tugenden traian's*, pp. 354-355.

¹³⁴ Bickerman, "Diva Augusta Marciana," pp. 362-365.

example of the name Augusta being treated as if it were a hereditary title, passed from mother to daughter upon the death of the mother. The public image that surrounds Matidia throughout her life has far more to do with her role as the daughter of Diva Marciana Augusta than as a member of the emperor's family, even upon the state coinage of Rome. This is the first real instance of the daughter of an Augusta being commemorated primarily for that fact, although the significance of being a daughter of an Augusta was to become more substantial under the Antonines. It certainly becomes clear that during the adoptive era, the name Augusta has taken on a symbolism above and beyond that of a celebrated (senior) female relative of the *princeps*, or a mother of Augusti and Caesars, and that the Augustae themselves are being celebrated as figures in their own right. This is particularly evident on the coin that represents Marciana as the sister of Trajan on the obverse, and her daughter Matidia on the reverse; this is the first example since the Poppaea/Claudia issues of two Augustae being commemorated on the same coin, and again it is a case of mother and daughter being presented together.¹³⁵ While the title Augusta was undoubtedly created to serve the role of augmenting male imperial legitimacy by honouring the mother of imperial sons, a necessary side effect of the title was to convey a certain degree of female imperial legitimacy upon the daughters of the Augusta. This can later be seen in the public image of Faustina Major and particularly Faustina Minor and Lucilla, three generations of descending Augustae who held the title as a badge of female honour.¹³⁶

Upon Trajan's unexpected death, Plotina Augusta was involved in selecting Hadrian, Trajan's distant cousin, to be the next *princeps*. Plotina's previous reputation as a

¹³⁵ *BMC III Trajan* 531; *RIC II Trajan* 742.

¹³⁶ *Hist. Aug. Marcus Antoninus* 20.6-20.7.

modest, quiet imperial wife is altered at this point in the writings of Dio, who now implies that she is an ambitious “mother” in the manner of Agrippina, actively involving herself in the dynastic politics of the empire.¹³⁷ According to Dio, Plotina concealed Trajan’s death so as to announce Hadrian’s adoption, which was ratified by a series of letters purporting to be from Trajan but signed by Plotina on his behalf.¹³⁸ The *Historia Augusta* supports this interpretation, referring to the adoption as being accomplished through a “trick” of Plotina.¹³⁹ Although it seems likely that Trajan had not yet come to an ultimate decision about his successor at the time of his death, it is surely relevant that the chosen man had been married to Sabina, daughter of Matidia Augusta, when she was only 12. While we must beware of assumptions made in retrospect -- Sabina was not, for example, Matidia’s only daughter nor her eldest -- this act has the resonance of a dynastic marriage arranged to bring Hadrian more closely into the emperor’s household. The *Historia Augusta*, however, suggests that the marriage of Hadrian and Sabina was orchestrated by Plotina, and that Trajan had not approved of it.¹⁴⁰

When Matidia Augusta died, early in the reign of Hadrian, the emperor himself delivered his mother-in-law’s funeral oration, deified her and then built a massive Corinthian-style temple in the Campus Martius in honour of Diva Matidia and Diva Marciana, raising the profile of his wife’s family even higher in the eyes of the public.¹⁴¹ He also gave Matidia gladiatorial games and other ceremonies.¹⁴² Diva Matidia coins are generally of similar types to those issued in honour of her mother,

¹³⁷ Dio 69.1.1-69.1.4.

¹³⁸ Dio 69.1.4.

¹³⁹ *Hist. Aug. Hadrian* 4.10.

¹⁴⁰ *Hist. Aug. Hadrian* 2.10.

¹⁴¹ *CIL* 14.3579; Birley, *Hadrian*, p. 107; Vermeule, “Livia to Helena,” p. 21.

¹⁴² *Hist. Aug. Hadrian* 9.9.

and were struck for Matidia's consecration in 119 CE.¹⁴³ An aureus and denarius coin type goes one step further by heralding Matidia Augusta as the daughter of Diva Marciana, without any reference to Trajan at all; whether these were released during Matidia Augusta's lifetime or after her death is not evident, although they are suggestive of being released before her consecration as Matidia is not herself referred to as a goddess.¹⁴⁴

After the death of Plotina Augusta, Hadrian wore black for nine days in his adoptive mother's honour, erected a temple in her memory and personally composed hymns to her.¹⁴⁵ Dio tells us that upon her death, Hadrian praised Plotina for never requesting anything of him that was unreasonable or unjustified, and therefore never obliging him to refuse her.¹⁴⁶ Hadrian commemorated both his deified father and mother on coins of the mint of Rome; in some cases it is difficult to tell if those featuring Plotina are posthumous or not, as she is often simply referred to as *Plotina Aug.*¹⁴⁷ These coins are generally supposed to belong to the year 118 CE in which Trajan was consecrated and his triumph posthumously celebrated.¹⁴⁸ One coin with the legend *Plotina Aug.* on the obverse and *Matidia Aug.* on the reverse may have been released early in Hadrian's reign to commemorate the two living Augustae, or after their deaths.¹⁴⁹

Sabina is perhaps the least visible woman of the "adoptive" era, as Dio and the *Historia Augusta*, the literary sources containing the main body of literary evidence

¹⁴³ *RIC II Trajan* 751-757; Mattingly & Sydenham *RIC II*, p. 318.

¹⁴⁴ *RIC II Trajan* 758-759.

¹⁴⁵ Dio 69.10.3.

¹⁴⁶ Dio 69.10.3.

¹⁴⁷ *RIC II Hadrian* 29-33.

¹⁴⁸ Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC. II* p. 318.

¹⁴⁹ *RIC II Hadrian* 34.

about Hadrian's reign, rarely refer to her.¹⁵⁰ From inscriptional evidence, we can see that Sabina followed her husband on most of his travels, even on the trip to Egypt when he founded a city in honour of his lover Antinous.¹⁵¹ Surprisingly, even in the context of a loveless or resentful marriage, Sabina was not made Augusta upon her husband's accession to the throne, nor did she receive the name upon the death and consecration of either her mother Matidia or that of her predecessor Plotina. She did not, in fact, become Augusta until Hadrian took the title *Pater Patriae* some time after 128 CE, eleven years after her husband became emperor.¹⁵² Bickerman reads the eventual bestowal of the title Augusta upon Sabina as a bribe to placate her about her husband's love affair with Antinous.¹⁵³ More likely, the delay in presenting Sabina with the title Augusta represents an attempt by Hadrian to restore the associations of maturity and seniority to the title, and to bring some restraint to the titles bestowed upon himself and his family. According to the dates presented by Balsdon, Sabina would have been about forty in the year that the prestigious title was bestowed upon her, a similar age to that at which the three Trajanic Augustae received the title.¹⁵⁴ This theory is supported by Hadrian's refusal of the title *Pater Patriae* when it was first offered to him and later in his reign because Augustus himself had only won the title late in life.¹⁵⁵ The majority of women who had held the title Augusta at this time were also of a mature age, and it is not too outlandish to suppose that this same criterion was being applied to Sabina. Temporini again argues the significance of *Pater Patriae*, suggesting that it would have been inappropriate for Sabina to be named Augusta before Hadrian was *Pater Patriae*, a

¹⁵⁰ In *Hist. Aug. Hadr.* 11.3. Hadrian refers to his wife as *morosam et aspersam* ("peevish and troublesome") and suggests that he would have divorced her had he been a private citizen.

¹⁵¹ Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, p. 46.

¹⁵² Balsdon, *Roman Women*, p. 139; Bickerman, "Diva Augusta Marciana," p. 367.

¹⁵³ Bickerman, "Diva Augusta Marciana," p. 367.

¹⁵⁴ Balsdon, *Roman Women*, p. 139.

¹⁵⁵ *Hist. Aug. Hadrian* 6.5.

title he refused many times throughout his reign before finally declaring himself worthy of it.¹⁵⁶ Whatever the reason behind the delay in making Sabina an Augusta, the result was nearly a decade in which there were no Augustae in the Roman imperial family. The right to be portrayed on the state coinage, an honour often associated with Augusta among the imperial women, was also withheld until this point; all of Sabina's appearances on coins of the mint of Rome during Hadrian's reign are with the name *Sabina Augusta*, paired with her husband's *Hadriani Aug. P.P.* ("Hadrian Augustus, Pater Patriae.")¹⁵⁷

It is worth noting that Hadrian also had female family members of his own: a mother, Domitia Paulina; a sister, Aelia Domitia Paulina; and a niece, Iulia Paulina.¹⁵⁸ There is no evidence either that the title Augusta was offered to any of these women during Hadrian's reign, or that honours of any particular type were ever presented to them; with Plotina Augusta firmly in place as Hadrian's adoptive mother, there was no reason to promote Hadrian's natural mother, who came from a provincial family and offered nothing to bolster Hadrian's imperial status. Likewise, no attempt is made to bring Hadrian's sister or her family into the imperial dynasty, despite the childlessness of Hadrian's marriage to Sabina, and his lack of interest in remarrying after her death. Indeed, Dio recounts the ridicule directed at Hadrian for giving excessive funeral honours to his lover Antinous (including naming a city after him, setting up various statues in his honour and declaring a star in the sky to be the spirit of Antinous - such a declaration being only one step away from outright deification) while neglecting immediate honours for his sister after her death.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p.32.

¹⁵⁷ *BMC III Hadrian* 893-954.

¹⁵⁸ Boatwright, "Imperial Women," pp. 516-518.

¹⁵⁹ Dio 69.11.3-69.11.4.

Given the established precedent of adopting outside the family for an imperial heir, coupled with Hadrian's general lack of interest in women, it is not particularly surprising that Hadrian did not remarry after the death of Sabina in 136 CE. What is notable is the emphasis on the posthumous role of Sabina as deified wife of the *princeps* during the remaining two years of Hadrian's reign, as a continuing female presence in the imperial propaganda. As Trajan's great-niece and the daughter/granddaughter of two deified Augustae, Sabina had forged a second familial connection between Trajan and Hadrian. After her death, she became equally important to the legitimisation of Hadrian's chosen heir Antoninus.¹⁶⁰ In the manner of Plotina, Sabina was publicly represented as the mother of Hadrian's newly adopted heir; the main difference being that Plotina had been alive to render her role relevant to the adoption. Sabina was certainly consecrated as a goddess, although it is arguable as to when this event took place, and whether it was Hadrian or Antoninus who initiated it; Mattingly and Sydenham suggest that the lack of Diva Sabina coins which can be specifically connected to Hadrian's reign implies that Antoninus took the responsibility of deifying his "mother," although this would mean that Antoninus consecrated Sabina at least half a year before he consecrated Hadrian, since we know from inscriptional evidence that she was deified before her husband.¹⁶¹ A lack of coin references to Diva Sabina does not necessarily mean that she was not consecrated during the reign of her husband, as it reflects the low key manner in which Hadrian also utilised Plotina's post-consecration public image.

Matidia the Younger, daughter of Matidia Augusta and elder sister of Sabina, was

¹⁶⁰ *Hist. Aug. Aelius* 6.9.

¹⁶¹ Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC. II* p. 318; *RIC II Antoninus Pius* 1073a.

not made Augusta and held only a minor role in imperial propaganda throughout the reign of Hadrian, although she appears in various inscriptions from the reign of Antoninus that refer to her as his maternal aunt, supporting the promotion of Sabina Augusta as his mother.¹⁶²

The clear message that emerges from a study of the “adoptive” Augustae is that the imperial wife is still not receiving any kind of automatic public status, and that Augusta is still not a title that any woman of the imperial family can take for granted. It is also clear that the title Augusta is taking on a higher significance in its own right than during previous dynasties; Marciana and Matidia both stand out as women for whom being Augusta is a more significant component of their public image than is their actual relationship to the emperor who bestowed the title upon them. We cannot take Matidia’s case as evidence that the daughter of an Augusta is automatically entitled to her mother’s status, however, as neither of Matidia’s daughters immediately succeeded her to the title as she had to her mother; Sabina had to wait eleven years after becoming an imperial wife before the title was allowed to her. More so than in previous eras, the women of the Trajanic-Hadrianic period appear to have earned the right to be named Augusta, not through their public position or imperial relationship so much as through actual worth. The delay in Sabina’s case, and the fact that Matidia was not given the title until the death of her mother, also re-emphasises the “maturity” that had previously been implied by the title. The importance of seniority to the title is not continued into the later dynasties, but it seems clear that it was something that Hadrian was attempting to promote and maintain.

¹⁶² Boatwright, “Imperial Women,” pp. 529-530.

Antoninus, when he came to the imperial throne, was already married to Annia Galeria Faustina, who had borne four children, though we only hear about one who survived to adulthood and to take a role in the imperial succession.¹⁶³ As was the case with Domitia many years earlier, Faustina Major received the name of Augusta from the senate almost immediately, with permission of her imperial husband, and she was heralded on various issues of state coinage as Faustina Augusta within a year.¹⁶⁴ As with Sabina, there is a strong association on the coins between the Antoninus' *Pater Patriae* title and his wife's Augusta title. Temporini observes that, as with Trajan and Hadrian, the haste with which Faustina received the title Augusta was entirely reliant on when her husband received *Pater Patriae*; Antoninus Pius did not refuse the title early as his predecessors had, and so there was no reason to delay presenting his wife with the title Augusta.¹⁶⁵ This close association between Augusta and *Pater Patriae* is predominantly a feature of the adoptive dynasty, and is not imposed with such exactitude at any other time. It is important not to read too much into this connection; the relevant point here is that an imperial wife not be seen to have titles of honour greater than those of her husband, and it did not restrict the title when given to women who were not married to an emperor.

Faustina Major died within three years of her husband's accession and was promptly deified by the senate. Her apotheosis was treated far more grandiosely than any previous imperial *diva*: gold and silver statues were officially voted to her, as were games in her honour.¹⁶⁶ Various coin types celebrate Diva Faustina, either on the

¹⁶³ *Hist. Aug. Antoninus Pius* 1.7.

¹⁶⁴ *Hist. Aug. Antoninus Pius* 5.2; *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 327-342.

¹⁶⁵ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p.33.

¹⁶⁶ *Hist. Aug. Antoninus Pius* 6.7-6.9.

reverse of coins dedicated to her husband or on the obverse of coins that do not mention her husband, with representation of other divine figures or concepts on the reverse.¹⁶⁷ One coin type represents Diva Faustina on the obverse and her living daughter Faustina Augusta on the reverse; the emperor is not mentioned at all on these coins, which follow in the tradition begun by Marciana and Matidia of celebrating the mother-daughter relationship of two honoured and beloved imperial women.¹⁶⁸ Antoninus built a temple for his wife in the Forum, where it still stands today, and a charitable foundation designed to provide dowries for poor or orphaned Roman girls was established in her memory; the destitute girls helped by this fund became known as *puellae faustinianae*, and the foundation was also commemorated on the state coinage.¹⁶⁹

Faustina Minor, daughter of Antoninus Pius and Faustina Major, was married to Marcus Aurelius, one of the two chosen heirs of the widowed Antoninus Pius.¹⁷⁰ Like Julia Titi before her, Faustina received the title of Augusta as the daughter of the emperor, in this case at the age of seventeen upon the birth of her first child; she was honoured with the right to be portrayed on coins at the same time.¹⁷¹ Grant suggests that it was particularly significant that Faustina was made Augusta before her husband was made Augustus, the future emperor Marcus Aurelius only holding the dynastic name of Caesar and the power of a tribune at the time that his wife was made Augusta.¹⁷² The significance of this, however, relies on a presumption that the title Augusta is predominantly intended for imperial wives despite the evidence to

¹⁶⁷ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 325-326, 343-410.

¹⁶⁸ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 407a.

¹⁶⁹ *Hist. Aug. Antoninus Pius* 8.1; *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 397-399a; Grant, *The Antonines*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁰ *Hist. Aug. Antoninus Pius* 10. 2-10.3.

¹⁷¹ Mattingly, *BMC IV* lxxvi.

¹⁷² Grant, *The Antonines*, p. 25; Bickerman, "Diva Augusta Marciana," pp. 367-368.

the contrary; only six of the fourteen Augustae preceding Faustina had received the title as the wife of an Augustus.

Faustina bore many children throughout her marriage, becoming the first abundantly fertile wife of a Roman *princeps*. This fertility was emphasised in every aspect of her public representation, particularly when she produced twin boys after many years of bearing daughters.¹⁷³ Her appearances on coins were many and various; she appears often on the obverse of coins bearing simply her name, Faustina Augusta, with no reference to her husband; generally the reverses of these depict one of a variety of goddesses, though a few unusual as coin types actually have Faustina Augusta on the obverse and Marcus Aurelius on the reverse.¹⁷⁴

Faustina Minor is rare in having been the daughter, wife and mother of emperors. After the promotion of her daughter Lucilla, Faustina was also an Augusta who was both daughter and mother of an Augusta. Matidia had also been the mother and daughter of Augustae, although the long gap between her death and Sabina's promotion to Augusta made less emphasis of this point. While Faustina Minor's public image revolves around her wifely and particularly her motherly attributes, she is also remembered as an adventurous and loyal imperial wife who travelled all over the Roman world with her husband on campaign.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, one of the honours Marcus Aurelius awarded to his wife was the title *Mater Castrorum* (Mother of the Camp) in honour of her inspirational role as a patron of the Roman armies; numismatic evidence suggests that this title was first awarded to Faustina during her lifetime, though it later became a significant element of her posthumous public

¹⁷³ RIC III M. Aurelius 675-681, 692, 718, 1634-1641, 1649-1650, 1673-1677.

¹⁷⁴ RIC III M. Aurelius 667-737, 1619-1690, 1720-1724.

¹⁷⁵ Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, p. 50.

image.¹⁷⁶ Marcus Aurelius also awarded his wife the posthumous epithet of *Pia*, setting a precedent for such epithets to be used in the names and titles of imperial women.¹⁷⁷ When Faustina Minor died, Marcus Aurelius delivered his wife's eulogy, rejoiced at the recognition of her deification by the senate (which he had politely requested), made the village of Halala where she had died into a Roman colony and established a temple there in her honour, and also established a new order of *puellae faustinianae*, presumably with the same intentions as the foundation set up in honour of her mother, to provide dowries for underprivileged girls.¹⁷⁸

After Faustina's death, Marcus Aurelius did not remarry, preferring to take a concubine so that his children did not have to "suffer a stepmother," a detail seen as so vital to an explanation of his character that it is the closing comment in the account of his life told in the *Historia Augusta*.¹⁷⁹ There was another Augusta of his reign, however, who held the name concurrently with Faustina. Their daughter Lucilla had been married to her father's co-emperor Lucius Verus at the age of sixteen.¹⁸⁰ It is not clear whether Lucilla was given the title of Augusta as the daughter or wife of an Augustus (or, indeed, as both), but she certainly appears on coins during her father's reign as *Lucilla Augusta* and *Lucilla Aug. Antonini Aug. F.*¹⁸¹ That none of her sisters appear to have received the title Augusta suggests that it was Lucilla's marriage to Lucius Verus that assured her the title. Lucilla was widowed after five years and her father arranged a hasty second marriage for her with Pompeianus, a man who was only the son of a knight; the *Historia Augusta*

¹⁷⁶ Dio 72.10.5; *Hist. Aug. Marc. Antoninus* 26.8; *RIC III M. Aurelius* 742, 748-749, 751-753, 1700, 1709, 1711-1712.

¹⁷⁷ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 738-741, 743-746, 750-753, 1691-1693, 1696-1699, 1701-1706, 1710-1718.

¹⁷⁸ *Hist. Aug. Marcus Antoninus* 26.5-26.9.

¹⁷⁹ *Hist. Aug. Marcus Antoninus* 29.10.

¹⁸⁰ *Hist. Aug. Marcus Antoninus* 7.8.

¹⁸¹ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 755-792, 1728-1781.

states that both Lucilla and her mother Faustina opposed the match, believing it to be far too lowly for a woman “who was Augusta and daughter of an Augusta.”¹⁸²

Again, we have evidence that the name Augusta and the children (both male and female) of an Augusta held a particular symbolic status. Other honours accorded to Lucilla during her early public life included seating at the theatre and having ceremonial fire carried before her in procession.¹⁸³ Herodian specifically notes that these honours were not removed after Lucilla’s marriage to the lesser Pompeianus; that he felt the need to say this suggests that the honours were generally assumed to be those due to an imperial wife rather than a mere imperial daughter, Augusta or not.

As with her mother, fertility and maternity are often emphasised on Lucilla’s coinage by the goddesses represented among her reverse types; several *Fecunditas* reverse types represent a female figure with children or nursing children, identified by Mattingly and Sydenham as possibly being Lucilla herself.¹⁸⁴ Lucilla’s daughter, however, the only child of hers whom we know to have lived to adulthood, is referred to in Dio but not named; the tradition of honouring children of the *Augustae* appears to have lapsed with this new generation, possibly because of the overwhelming dynastic focus on Commodus as the heir and new emperor. Even though Lucilla was still an Augusta after her equestrian second marriage, her dynastic significance had significantly diminished even towards the end of her father’s reign.

A new Augusta arrived in the imperial family with Commodus’ marriage to

¹⁸² *Hist. Aug. Marcus Antoninus* 20.6-20.7.

¹⁸³ Herodian 1.8.4.

¹⁸⁴ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 1736-1739, 1747-1748; Mattingly, *BMC IV* cxxxiv.

Crispina.¹⁸⁵ It is not clear whether she received the title at her marriage or upon the promotion of her husband to sole *princeps* after his father's death. Mattingly acknowledges the possibility that some of Crispina's Augusta coinage predates Marcus Aurelius' death in 190 CE.¹⁸⁶ In any case, there is no suggestion of a friendly accord between the Augustae of Commodus' reign, as there was between Plotina and Marciana/Matidia during the reign of Trajan. Herodian relates Lucilla's anger when her brother's wife superseded her in status; while Commodus had allowed his sister to keep the honours accorded to her by their father, it is clear that Crispina was now the senior Augusta.¹⁸⁷ Lucilla does not appear on any extant examples of her brother's coinage, which confirms the notion that the new Augusta had supplanted the previous one or, perhaps more significantly, the imperial wife had supplanted the imperial sister. Lucilla was driven into exile by Commodus for her role in a conspiracy against him, and was later murdered either by her brother or at his order.¹⁸⁸

Crispina appears on many issues of state coinage during her husband's reign (and possibly during the later years of his father's reign), usually with her bust on the obverse (either with only her name *Crispina Augusta* or with her name paired with that of her husband, *Imp Commodi Aug*).¹⁸⁹ She also appears on many of her husband's reverses, in the supportive role as consort. Like her unfortunate sister-in-law, Crispina ended her days in exile and was executed by Commodus, in this case for adultery.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Dio 72.33.1.

¹⁸⁶ Mattingly, *BMC IV* clxxi.

¹⁸⁷ Herodian 1.8.4.

¹⁸⁸ *Hist. Aug. Commodus Antoninus* 4.4; Dio 73.4.5-73.4.6; Herodian 1.8.8.

¹⁸⁹ *RIC III Commodus* 276-290, 665-686.

¹⁹⁰ *Hist. Aug. Commodus Antoninus* 5.9; Dio 73.4.6.

The connotations of the word Augusta changed dramatically between the “adoptive” and Antonine reigns. During the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, the Augustae were seen to earn or deserve the title, only imperial women of mature age and senior status were offered the title, and the imperial wife was not accorded a particular status among the other imperial women simply for being married to the emperor. All of these practices were disregarded under the Antonine dynasty. All four of the Antonine Augustae received the title in their roles as wives of emperors or potential emperors, even the two who were also imperial daughters. This was the first true era of the Roman imperial wife. The power and significance of both Faustinas carried over to their successors, so that the title Augusta was more closely tied than ever to the role of imperial wife. To be an Augusta, however, was still seen as a highly significant thing; Faustina Minor’s staunch defence of Lucilla’s public status after the death of Lucius Verus implies this most strongly. Lucilla’s evident loss of status after her second marriage, and the arrival of Crispina, makes it clear that being Augusta is no longer enough to secure any degree of public status. An imperial wife who is Augusta, at least at the end of this particular dynasty, outranks an Augusta who is not an imperial wife.

The next emperor, Publius Helvius Pertinax, refused the name of Augusta when it was voted to his wife, Flavia Titiana, by the senate; at the same time he refused to accept the name of Caesar on behalf of his son, preferring to wait until he had “earned” it.¹⁹¹ Both of these actions suggest an attempt to present himself as a restrained emperor, possibly to distance himself from Commodus’ excesses.

¹⁹¹ *Hist. Aug. Pertinax* 6.9.

Honours within Pertinax's imperial family were to be earned, not bestowed lightly. That the senate offered the title Augusta to Flavia Titiana suggests that they were by now acting under an assumption that all imperial wives were automatically worthy of the honour, or that all emperors would wish it to be offered to their wives. That Pertinax refused the title demonstrates that to be an Augusta was still considered to be a substantial honour, and one that an imperial wife might conceivably not yet be worthy of.

Didius Julianus succeeded Pertinax as emperor of Rome for only sixty-six days. The senate voted the title of Augusta to Julianus' wife and daughter, Manlia Scantilla and Didia Clara, and state coins were struck in commemoration of the event.¹⁹²

Evidently Julianus had less of an interest in public modesty than Pertinax. When Julianus made his first public appearance as *princeps* of Rome, his speech contained thanks that he and his wife and daughter had been given the names of Augustus and Augusta.¹⁹³ The implication is that the bestowal of both names was an indication of the senate's support of Didius Julianus' right to rule; he had no son to name Caesar, but a daughter named Augusta at least suggested hope for a future dynasty. This is the first time that we see two women given the title Augusta so close to the beginning of a new emperor's reign; this is also the first time since Poppaea and Claudia that we see a mother and daughter accorded the title simultaneously.

After the death of Julianus, however, both of the Didian Augustae vanished from the imperial stage. The *Historia Augusta* states that both Didia Clara's emancipation from her father, and the name of Augusta, were officially "removed" from her, but

¹⁹² *Hist. Aug. Didius Julianus* 3.4, 9.3.

¹⁹³ *Hist. Aug. Didius Julianus* 3.5.

does not state whether her mother also lost her title.¹⁹⁴ We must assume that she did, although it is unsurprising that the new regime wanted to ensure particularly that an Augusta of childbearing age was not left behind, and it is surely significant that only the removal of the title from Didia Clara was worth mentioning.

This is the first (and, perhaps, only) example in the literary sources of the name of Augusta being revoked, which goes some way towards illustrating how significant it had become as a title, approximately 170 years after it first came into use. Formerly, disgraced Augustae such as Crispina, Lucilla, Domitia (during her brief separation from Domitian) and even Agrippina may well have had the title formally removed from them, though there is no evidence for this either way. It may not be overly significant that this is the first definite example of the title Augusta being removed from a woman, as this situation had simply not arisen before; the only Augusta who had previously survived the end of a dynasty was Domitia Longina, and her advanced age and childlessness as well as her complicity in her husband's death had left her as a figure who was seen as sympathetic to the new regime. Such revocation would have been at the whim of the new emperor in those instances, whereas the removal of the title Augusta from Didia Clara can only have been a matter of political expediency, to prevent any man she married or son she bore from claiming rights to the throne through a relationship to her. That removing the title was seen as enough to prevent this (when killing her, for instance, would have been far more effective) is curious, as is the lack of explicit reference as to whether Manlia Scantilla also lost her title; she may not have been of child-bearing age, but surely any man who married Julianus' widow might also make some kind of claim. The

¹⁹⁴ *Hist. Aug. Didius Julianus* 8.9.

logical conclusion for this apparent contradiction is that being married to an Augusta conferred less imperial legitimacy than being the son of an Augusta.

The wife of Septimius, Julia Domna, ushered in a new era for the imperial women of Rome, making the title of Augusta her own and adding a new power to it in a way not seen since the days of Agrippina. According to legend, Septimius Severus, an African legate, chose his second wife upon hearing that a girl named Julia living in Syria was destined to marry a king.¹⁹⁵ Within eight years of the marriage, Severus had conquered Rome and Julia had become the first in a new line of Augustae. In her first few years as an imperial wife, Julia was represented on coins as Julia Domna Augusta, but from 195 CE onwards the most common title ascribed to her on the coinage was simply Julia Augusta.¹⁹⁶ The power of the full honorific name once given to Livia upon her adoption into the Julian family was again presented in association with a woman whose marriage was the foundation for a dynasty. The marriage of Septimius and Julia evokes that of Augustus and Livia in many ways, presenting a powerful image of conqueror and consort in partnership to create a new regime. While Julia's political power was necessarily limited by her gender, as Livia's had been, she was certainly politically active, both through the control of her public image and via her personal relationship with the emperor. The imperial succession was assured by Septimius' and Julia's two sons Caracalla and Geta, who were seven and four years old when their father became *princeps*. The two healthy sons enhanced Julia's status, as it ensured that she was seen not only as the wife of the emperor but as the mother of future emperors. Julia Domna received an extraordinary number of honours and titles during her career as wife and mother of

¹⁹⁵ *H.A Severus* 3.8-3.9.

¹⁹⁶ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 534-607, 838-894.

the Augusti, and the sheer wealth of extant portraits and inscriptional evidence is a testament to her prominence as a public figure during her lifetime, and to the importance that the Severan regime placed upon the public image of the imperial family.¹⁹⁷ As Hannestad states, the increase in visual portraiture of the Augusta/imperial wife at this time is by no means surprising, as it represents a quite natural progression from the dynastic representation of Faustina Minor.¹⁹⁸ The importance of the imperial wife, established so strongly under the Antonines, reached its peak under the reign of Septimius Severus; and when that importance waned under the reign of Caracalla, it was only because the prominence of Julia Domna lent a renewed significance to the role of imperial mother.

Caracalla married Fulvia Plautilla, daughter of Septimius Severus' close friend and advisor Plautianus.¹⁹⁹ Plautilla was been given the title of Augusta and the right to appear on coins as the wife of Caracalla before the death of Septimius Severus in 211 CE, but presumably after Caracalla received the title Augustus and became his father's co-emperor in 198 CE.²⁰⁰ When Plautianus was publicly disgraced for conspiring against Septimius, Caracalla took the opportunity to exile his wife as well.²⁰¹ Plautilla's downfall was supposedly caused by the machinations of her jealous mother-in-law Julia Domna, whose influence at court had waned during the period of Plautianus' prominence.²⁰² According to Dio, Caracalla had Plautilla killed along with various others upon the death of Septimius.²⁰³ He did not remarry after his accession, either during the year that he and his brother Geta ruled as joint

¹⁹⁷ *PIR*² *Iulia Domna* 663.

¹⁹⁸ Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, p. 258.

¹⁹⁹ Dio 77.1.2.

²⁰⁰ *RIC IV Caracalla* 66, 349, 359-373.

²⁰¹ Dio 77.6.3.

²⁰² *Hist. Aug. Severus* 14.8.

²⁰³ Dio 78.1.1.

Augusti, or when he ruled as sole *princeps* of Rome after the murder of Geta in 212 CE. There is no evidence in the sources, either inscriptional or literary, of Geta ever marrying, which is odd considering that he had been of marriageable age for several years when he died. In any case, Caracalla's decision to remain unmarried during his reign as *princeps* left Julia Domna to continue unchallenged in her role as *princeps femina* of the imperial court.

As with Livia, Agrippina Minor and Plotina, Julia Domna was not only celebrated as the imperial mother during her son's reign, but held the rare honour of being the widow of a god. She received many new and extravagant titles during this new phase of her career, including the unprecedented *mater senatus et patriae*.²⁰⁴ On coins, she appeared with the legend *Julia Pia Felix Aug*, having acquired the kind of epithets that had previously only been attached to the names of emperors.²⁰⁵ After Caracalla was brutally assassinated, Julia Domna took her own life. Herodian suggests both that she was invited to kill herself and that she chose to do so out of grief at losing both sons within such a short period of time (six years).²⁰⁶ While it has been generally assumed by modern scholars such as Grant that Julia Domna was deified by either Elagabalus or Alexander, there is little evidence of any official Roman cult or consecration.²⁰⁷ She is often referred to as a goddess in inscriptional evidence, but this does not require an official deification; imperial women such as Livia were often called a goddess (particularly in inscriptions stemming from the East) long before an official consecration, while other imperial women such as Messalina were heralded as goddesses during their lifetime despite never officially

²⁰⁴ *PIR*² *Iulia Domna* 663; *RIC IV Caracalla* 380-381, 588; e.g. *CIL* 6.5333.

²⁰⁵ *RIC IV Caracalla* 373a-395, 583-608.

²⁰⁶ Herodian 4.13.8.

²⁰⁷ Grant, *The Severans*, p. 47.

receiving that honour. More troubling are the coin types heralding Diva Julia; they imply she has been made a goddess, and yet there are so few of them that she evidently did not receive much in the way of an official cult, which seems strange given her high prominence in the imperial family and her close familial connection to the emperors who came after her son.²⁰⁸ There are no references to Julia Domna's deification in the literary sources, and given that she was predeceased by her sons there is little reason to assume either Alexander or Elagabalus would have gained a propaganda advantage through building up her character; both had a mother and grandmother to promote.

The imperial dynasty of the Severans was unexpectedly revived by Julia Domna's younger sister, Julia Maesa. This Julia had two daughters, Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea, each of whom had a son. The emperor who had immediately succeeded Caracalla was Macrinus, and he soon found himself at war with a faction determined to promote Julia Soaemias's son (later known as Elagabalus) as the illegitimate son of Caracalla. Julia Maesa and Julia Soaemias themselves appeared on the battlefield urging on the army, and in due course Elagabalus was declared emperor. The first honours he gave to the women who had set his triumph in motion, his mother and grandmother, were the right to be portrayed on coins and the name of Augusta.²⁰⁹ Elagabalus's three imperial wives, each married and repudiated in quick succession, were Julia Paula, Aquilia Severa and Annia Faustina.²¹⁰ All three were honoured with the title of Augusta and coin portraits despite having such brief careers as

²⁰⁸ *RIC IV Caracalla* 396, 609, *Severus Alexander* 715-716. For further examination of the Diva Julia Domna question, see pages 272-273.

²⁰⁹ Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, p. 61; *RIC IV Elagabalus* 207-208, 234-279, 400-424.

²¹⁰ Herodian 5.6.1-5.6.2.

imperial wife.²¹¹

Herodian tells us that Julia Maesa, who had been instrumental in setting Elagabalus on the throne, also took it upon herself to deprive her erratic grandson of that throne, not wanting to lose her own position of prominence when he was inevitably replaced.²¹² To that end, she turned to her other daughter, Julia Mamaea, whose thirteen-year-old son (later known as Alexander Severus) showed promise. This new mother and daughter team spread rumours that Mamaea's son was also the bastard son of Caracalla, even convincing Elagabalus to adopt his young cousin/"brother" as his son and heir.²¹³ Within a year, Elagabalus and his mother Julia Soaemias had been murdered by the supporters of young Alexander Severus.²¹⁴ Now it was Julia Mamaea who was celebrated on coins as Augusta along with her mother Julia Maesa.²¹⁵ The extremely elderly Julia Maesa died in her bed, and was awarded imperial honours and deification.²¹⁶

Alexander's wife Orbiana also briefly enjoyed prominence as an Augusta, appearing on state coinage in her own right as well as sharing coins with her husband.²¹⁷ Despite the fact that it was quite usual for the wife of an Augustus to be made Augusta at this time – indeed, it would have been highly unusual had Orbiana not received this honour – Julia Mamaea was reputedly jealous of the honorific title being awarded to her son's wife and treated her with such insults and abuse that

²¹¹ *PIR*² *Iulia Cornelia Paula Augusta* 660, *Iulia Aquilia Severa Augusta* 648, *Annia Faustina Augusta* 710; *RIC IV Elagabalus* 205-206, 209-233.

²¹² Herodian 5.3.3-5.3.12, 5.7.1.

²¹³ Herodian 5.7.1-5,

²¹⁴ Herodian 5.8.8-5.8.9.

²¹⁵ *RIC IV Severus Alexander* 310, 314-318, 328-380, 659-714.

²¹⁶ Herodian 6.4.1; *RIC IV Severus Alexander* 377-380, 712-714.

²¹⁷ *RIC IV Severus Alexander* 318-327, 655-658.

Orbiana's father laid charges against her. Mamaea was so outraged at this that she ordered him executed, and had Orbiana exiled to Libya.²¹⁸ Mamaea eventually died in as brutal a manner as the other Severan Julias, murdered alongside her son.²¹⁹ It has been argued that because of the youth and inexperience of Alexander, his reign represented the pinnacle of female power within the Roman empire; certainly it was during this period that Ulpian acknowledged that an Augusta could be given the privileges of an emperor, a weighty statement given the history of limited female imperial power.²²⁰ Evidently the strength of female imperial power depended upon a weak and inexperienced emperor (such as Nero in the very early days of his reign, when Agrippina ruled in all but name), but the fact that this female power was acknowledged so formally in legislation demonstrates how greatly attitudes had changed since the time of Augustus.

The Severan dynasty was an age that renewed the importance of the imperial mother as a force of political power; at the same time, however, this period represented a continuation of the prominence of the imperial wife that had been established under the Antonines. Every imperial wife during the reigns of Septimius, Caracalla, Elagabalus and Alexander was accorded the title of Augusta, though it seems clear that (with the exception of Julia Domna, who had no mother-in-law to compete with) they held less public status than their husband's mother or grandmother. This was also a time in which the title Augusta was no longer the only or most significant title awarded to imperial women; Faustina Minor may have acquired titles other than Augusta, but none of these appeared to eclipse the original name of imperial female honour. The Severan Julias, however, acquired various titles and honorific names

²¹⁸ Herodian 6.1.9-10.

²¹⁹ Herodian 6.9.7.

²²⁰ *Digest* 1.3.31, from Book XIII *ad legem Iuliam et Papiam*; Grant, *The Severans*, p. 48.

that expanded upon the importance of Augusta, possibly to distinguish them from their daughters-in-law, who only received the bare title. This period, in which the Augustae, or, at least, the maternal Augustae, wielded more power than any imperial woman had before, is also a period during which the title appeared to be insufficient as an imperial female honour.

The death of the last of the Syrian Julias and the final destruction of the Severan dynasty did not mean the end for the Augustae. As the Roman empire descended into a chaotic era during which any powerful military leader might become the new emperor, the tradition of Augusta as an honorific female title continued, although we do not have as neat a chronology from this point onwards. There are very few identifiable imperial women for several decades after the fall of Alexander, but notable Augustae of the 3rd and 4th centuries CE include Severina, wife of Aurelian; Valeria, daughter of Diocletian; and Helena, mistress of Constantius Chlorus and mother of Constantine. The use of Augusta as an honorific title of the imperial feminine continued beyond Christianity and into Byzantine times up until the fall of empire with the very last generation of Roman imperial women: Pulcheria, Eudocia and Licinia Eudoxia, respectively the sister, wife and daughter of Theodosius II; each were publicly and officially honoured with the title of Augusta, a title now resonant with more than four hundred years of imperial female history.²²¹

²²¹ Figure 72, Figure 73, Figure 74.

Chapter Two: Matronal Virtues and the Augusta

From Livia onwards, the domestic virtue of *pudicitia* in its many forms was an essential element of the Augusta's public image. *Pudicitia* is often translated as "chastity," but its meaning for Roman society was far more complex and significant than sexual restraint or marital fidelity.¹ *Pudicitia* was an ideal that encompassed wifely virtue in all its forms: modesty, loyalty, chastity and obedience. The legendary Lucretia displayed *pudicitia* in her general wifely behaviour, and also when she killed herself rather than live with the sexual disgrace of having been raped.² Ovid's interpretation of the story emphasises the point by presenting a literary Lucretia who falls to the ground in such a way as to ensure her legs are still decently covered.³ Ovid also uses the word *pudica* twice in the Lucretia story, to describe her "virtuous" tears and to describe her as a *nupta pudica* ("virtuous spouse.")⁴ Octavia, sister of Augustus and wife of Antony, displayed *pudicitia* by loyally continuing to run Antony's household even after he had abandoned her for his mistress Cleopatra; at this time, Octavia was not only raising her own children from a former marriage, and those she had borne to Antony, but also Antony's children from his former marriage.⁵ After the death of Antony and Cleopatra,

¹ Mueller provides an overview of the most significant evidence and scholarship on the subject of *pudicitia*, noting in particular its significance to men as well as women, and its close association with the feminine aspect of Roman religion, with particular reference to Juno and Valerius Maximus. Mueller, "Vita, Pudicitia, Libertas," pp. 224-227. Treggiari also discusses the subject of *pudicitia* comprehensively, looking at the importance of *pudicitia* ("wifely virtue") to Roman marriage. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, p. 233.

² Ovid, *Fasti* 2.725-2.844; Livy 1.58.7-1.58.12; Val. Max 6.1.1. Small discusses the importance of chastity to the artistic depictions of Lucretia in Small, "The Death of Lucretia," pp. 156-157.

³ Ovid, *Fasti* 2.831-2.836.

⁴ Ovid, *Fasti* 2.757, 2.794.

⁵ Plutarch, *Ant.* 87.

Octavia even took their children into her home, a gesture which demonstrated publicly that she was a virtuous wife and mother despite her husband's betrayal.⁶

A few generations earlier, Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, had displayed *pudicitia* when she refused an offer of marriage from Ptolemy after her husband's death.⁷ To be *univira*, a wife who has only had one husband, had a special social and sacred status in ancient Rome.⁸ Despite Augustus' preference for women of the middle and upper classes to remarry after becoming divorced or widowed, the status of the *univira* was inextricably linked with *pudicitia*. Most significantly, the ceremonies that celebrated Pudicitia as a goddess were only open to women who were *univirae*.⁹ The divine figure of Pudicitia was associated with an aspect of Fortuna and her cult worship was both matriarchal and patrician by nature.¹⁰ According to Livy, one patrician woman, Verginia, had been expelled from the order for marrying a plebeian; after denouncing the other women for acting thus to a good, dutiful and modest wife who was of patrician blood despite her marriage to a plebeian, Verginia founded an altar within her own house, dedicating it to Pudicitia Plebeia and only allowing plebeian *univirae* of proven modesty to serve in the rituals to the goddess.¹¹ Livia restored the shrines of Pudicitia Plebeia and Pudicitia Patricia as early as 28-27 BCE, around the same time that her husband Augustus began a programme to introduce strict moral codes including the *Lex Julia*; Kleiner suggests that Livia was thus taking on the responsibility of representing the ideal of wifely virtue in order to

⁶ Plutarch, *Ant.* 87.

⁷ Plutarch, *Tib. Gracch.* 1.4.

⁸ CIL 6.2318, 3604, 13299, 13303, 25392; Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, pp. 235-236, 498-499.

⁹ Livy 10.23.3-10.23.10.

¹⁰ Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores*, pp. 207-208.

¹¹ Livy 10.23.1-10.23.10.

support her husband's political and legal reforms.¹² Winter, who credits Augustus with the restoration of the cult of Pudicitia, likewise suggests that there is a correlation between the *lex Julia* and Augustus' wish to associate his family with the goddess Pudicitia.¹³ There is certainly a familiar pattern evident in the matronly virtues that Augustus was demanding through his legal reforms, and those he wished to encourage through more subtle forms of propaganda.

The association between the Vestals and the Augustae, which had been established from the very beginning of Livia's public life, may also suggest another reading of the expectations of chastity and wifely virtue placed upon the Augustae. The Vestals and their chastity were viewed by the Romans to represent the fortune of the city: if the flame in the temple of Vesta died, it meant not only that the chastity of the Vestals had been compromised, but that the city was doomed.¹⁴ Considering the high public profile of the women of the imperial family, particularly those who had received the title Augusta, it is conceivable that their public image of chastity and *pudicitia* was intended to symbolise fortune and prosperity on behalf of the city.¹⁵

While the ideal of wifely virtue was a powerful element in the history and anecdotes surrounding Roman women, the implication of *pudicitia* by modest dress and appearance was also highly important. Valerius Maximus discusses such indulgences as gold and purple garments, and hair dye, that were once tolerated in women (so that their *pudicitia* should not be seen as too austere) but by his time were

¹² Kleiner, "Imperial Women as Patrons," p. 33.

¹³ Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, pp. 46-47.

¹⁴ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.66.1, 2.67.5; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol. I*, pp. 50-35; Parker, "Why were the Vestals Virgins?" pp. 56-57.

¹⁵ For further discussion of the relationship between Vesta and the Augustae, see pages 184-189 and 246.

seen as examples of immodesty.¹⁶ The physical dress and appearance of the Augustae was to be greatly influenced by the concept of demonstrable *pudicitia*, the implication being that restraint in clothes and style demonstrated that the woman in question was virtuous and modest in other ways appropriate for a wife.

Dio tells us that Augustus announced to the senators that he could do no more than legislate against immorality, and that they should be personally responsible for guiding and commanding their wives as he did his own -- when asked to elaborate, he spoke vaguely of women's dress and behaviour, which Dio dismisses as hypocritical.¹⁷ The implication here is that the wife of the *princeps*, in terms of propaganda, was a political construct quite separate from the real Livia Drusilla, expected to represent the ideal matronly behaviour to the people in political speeches, but not necessarily in real life. This is not to suggest that Livia herself was not an excellent example of a Roman wife. Even the sources that most viciously criticise Livia never make any suggestion of sexual misdemeanours beyond the haste of her marriage to Augustus while still pregnant to her previous husband.¹⁸ Instead, it is political issues and those of familial impiety that make up the invective against Livia: accusations that she poisoned various relatives of her husband so that her own relatives might gain greater political status and eventually become heirs to the throne. Pro-Livia sources, however, are quick to emphasise *pudicitia* as being her most distinctive virtue. Valerius Maximus said that Pudicitia (the goddess personifying this virtue) attended the couch of Livia.¹⁹ Ovid's references to the *princeps femina* in his *ex Ponto* particularly focus on her position as a role model of chastity. Her

¹⁶ Val. Max. 2.1.5.

¹⁷ Dio 54.16.4-54.16.5.

¹⁸ Suet *Aug.* 69.1-69.2; Dio 48.44.

¹⁹ Val. Max. 6.1 *praef.*

virtues, he tells us, are so superior that the *pudicitia* of the olden days cannot surpass that of modern times.²⁰ He also refers to Livia as the Vesta of pure matrons, making it clear that he flatters both her husband and her son by that comment.²¹ Livia's public image associated her closely with Vesta, a goddess whose worship was primarily concerned with female issues such as chastity, fertility and domestic virtue, which further emphasises the importance of these issues to Livia's own reputation.²² Dio quotes Livia herself as declaring that for a chaste woman, naked men are as statues.²³ Tacitus, who is responsible for much of the anti-Livia invective, is nevertheless convinced of her traditional attitude towards the sanctity of the home:

sanctitate domus priscum ad morem, comis ultra quam antiquis feminis probatum, mater impotens, uxor facilis et cum artibus mariti, simulatione filii bene composita.²⁴

In the purity of her house, she was of the ancient tradition, but more obliging than the women of old would approve. She was an imperious mother, an accommodating wife and was well matched to her husband's wiles as well as her son's insecurities.

Even the claim by Suetonius that Livia provided girls for her husband's bedchamber does not contradict the image of her chastity; indeed, it shows her as a dutiful wife who put her husband's needs above even the wish for propriety.²⁵ The author of the *Consolatio ad Liviam* not only praises Livia's *pudicitia*, but also associates this virtue closely with a concern for household matters and the private sphere of women

²⁰ Ovid *ex Ponto* 3.1.114-3.1.116.

²¹ Ovid *ex Ponto* 4.13.29-4.13.30.

²² For further exploration of Livia's relationship with Vesta, see pages 185, 231-234, 243.

²³ Dio 58.2.4.

²⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 5.1.

²⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 71.1.

rather than participating overtly in politics and public life.²⁶ Whether this reputation for exceptional devotion to the virtue of *pudicitia* was based on reality or a highly sophisticated management of Livia's public image is largely irrelevant; the important point is that she was remembered for sexual morality, which is a testament to how effectively she fulfilled her role as consort to the *princeps* who instituted radical social legislation in promotion of morality. That Livia's surviving detractors did not use accusations of sexual immorality as a weapon against her is a testament to her reputation; any suggestion of domestic misconduct was evidently beyond the realm of credibility.

Wood suggests that Livia's reputation was such that although her previous marriage meant she was not eligible to be named *univira*, wife to a single husband, it was suggested that she deserved an honorary version of that title, if not the title itself.²⁷ Barrett discusses Horace's use of the phrase *unico gaudens mulier marito*, which not only states the pre-eminence of Livia's husband, but also implies that she is worthy of being considered one of the *univirae*.²⁸ The traditional idealisation of *univira*, a feature of funerary inscriptions and Latin literature, suggested not only loyalty in the case of a widowed *univira*, but also a certain fortunate nature: a *univira* was lucky enough to keep her first husband in a time when early mortality and divorce were both common.²⁹ The sacred nature of a *univira* is cemented by the importance placed upon this status in relation to female religious activity: many female priesthoods could only be held by a *univira*, some specific religious rites could only be performed by a *univira*, the wife of the *flamen dialis* not only had to be *univira*

²⁶ *Cons. Liv.* 43-50.

²⁷ Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 76.

²⁸ Horace, *Carm.* 3.14.5; Barrett, *Livia*, p. 125.

²⁹ Rawson, *The Family in Ancient Rome*, p. 32.

but the couple were not allowed to divorce, and candidates hoping to become Vestal Virgins could only be considered if their parents had only been married to each other.³⁰ A *univira*'s presence at weddings or other sacred ceremonies was thought to pass her great fortune on to others.³¹ As well its sacred connotations, *univira* was used as a term to glorify a good wife, and on funerary inscriptions was often listed among other wifely virtues such as *pietas*, *castitas* and *pudicitia*.³²

An association between the role of the *matrona* in producing wool and clothing for her household, and the traditional virtues of Roman womanhood had long existed in Rome, as exemplified by the legend of Lucretia and the countless references to domestic industry on funerary inscriptions such as that in honour of "Turia," whose domestic virtues included obedience, chastity, sociability, amiability, modest piety and discreet sartorial elegance as well as diligence in wool working.³³ Augustus' declaration that he wore homespun clothes personally produced by the female members of his family is a good example of the manner in which he used the private behaviour of his womenfolk as a tool of public propaganda.³⁴ Dixon refers to both Livia and the legendary Lucretia (who also worked in wool) as "industrious trophy wives" whose activities reflected "moral kudos" upon their husbands.³⁵ The association between weaving and sexual morality was certainly prominent during the Augustan period, although it remains a re-occurring theme in epitaphs and legends for some generations to come. A less obvious implication of the homespun fabric is

³⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 2.86; Aulus Gellius, *Attic.* 10.15.24; Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitatis* 13, *De monogamia* 17.4.

³¹ Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitatis* 13.

³² Lightman & Zeisel, "Univira," pp. 22-24.

³³ Livy 1.57.9 (Lucretia); *ILS* 8393 (Turia); Dixon, "Exemplary Housewife or Luxurious Slut?" pp. 63-64.

³⁴ Suet. *Aug.* 73.

³⁵ Dixon, *Reading Roman Women*, p. 118.

that it presents an undeniably Roman contrast to the Hellenistic and Eastern fashions of gauzy, silken clothes; the garments worn by Augustus and his family could not be mistaken for extravagant foreign imports if they were homespun by his wife, sister and daughter.³⁶ This, of course, may simply be another example of Augustus re-interpreting his family life in the name of public propaganda; we know that Livia did not need to personally perform all of the household wool work herself because inscriptional evidence has provided a great deal of information about Livia's personal staff, from which we can begin to construct theories about how her household operated.³⁷ Livia had a large personal staff consisting of freedmen, freedwomen and slaves, and there was therefore no need for her to perform mundane tasks; that she is publicly described as doing so is significant, since it means that it was desirable for the wife of Augustus to be seen (and heard) to be domestically active, a practical housewife rather than an idle queen. The status gained by a Roman *matrona* through domestic industry, whether that industry was personally performed or merely supervised by her, was a practical as well as ideological ideal.

Purcell examines the myth of Livia the poisoner, finding its origins in a recipe collection of simple home remedies, some of which are attributed to the imperial women of the Augustan reign including Octavia, Antonia Minor and Livia.³⁸ Again, this suggests that although the imperial household was not short of slaves, Augustus's womenfolk chose to perform the same wifely duties that a poor man's wife might: mixing tinctures and potions for common ailments as well as sewing and weaving. It also demonstrates that while Livia was never accused of sexually betraying Augustus, the betrayal she was accused of (poisoning members of his

³⁶ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 44.

³⁷ Treggiari, "Jobs in the household of Livia," pp. 48-49.

³⁸ Purcell, "Livia and the Womanhood," p. 95.

family in order to promote her own descendants) was particularly vile, implying that she had abused her position of trust within the domestic sphere.

A celebration of marital concord can be distinguished from the other “wifely virtues” that form the Roman concept of *pudicitia*, if only because it implies an equal contribution from the husband and wife. The representation of Concordia, both as a general concept as well as the divine personification of the virtue, is a regular feature in the public image of many imperial marriages. Livia and Augustus were certainly seen as being part of a lasting and loving partnership. That their marriage lasted so long, particularly when it became obvious she would bear no children to him, is a testament to the strength of their relationship even without the words of Suetonius:

ac statim Liviam Drusillam matrimonio Tiberi Neronis et quidem praegnantem abduxit dilexitque et probavit unice ac perseverenter.³⁹

And at once he took Livia Drusilla away from Tiberius Nero’s marriage, although she was pregnant, and he loved and esteemed her above all others, unendingly.

Of course, there are reasons other than love why a couple would stay together. Augustus was particularly devoted to the idea that he and his family represented a moral example to ordinary people, demonstrating that the values portrayed in the various laws and social reforms he had made public were genuinely something to aspire to; if he was to represent the ideal husband and father, of the nation as well as of the Julian family, divorcing Livia was not an option. Livia’s role as a religious

³⁹ Suet. *Aug.* 62.2.

patron emphasised the importance of concord to the public image of her marriage; she was involved in two dedications to the divine image of Concordia, personally establishing a shrine within her own Porticus Liviae, and partnering Tiberius in a pledge to restore the Temple of Concord on 16 January, 10 CE.⁴⁰ Post-consecration, the cult of Livia as Diva Augusta was combined with that of Divus Augustus, the two *divi* sharing a temple and a *flamen* and being presented as a united divine couple. This model was later used for the post-consecration public image of imperial couples such as Trajan and Plotina, Hadrian and Sabina, and in particular Antoninus Pius and Faustina Major, whose marital concord was reflected in their post-consecration imagery, worship and cult.⁴¹

The artists of the official and unofficial portraits of Livia had a fine balance to strike, emphasising her important role as the wife of the *princeps*, while not actively presenting her as a queen to his king. Not only was it vital to avoid any suggestion that Augustus was *rex* rather than *princeps*, it was just as important that Livia not be associated too closely with the image of Cleopatra, except by way of contrast to the foreign queen. Augustus may have been keen to see Livia represented in public statuary, but he never included his wife on his state coinage. As Barrett notes, this cannot solely be due to Augustus' sensitivity about Cleopatran imagery, as Cleopatra was only relevant at the very beginning of his reign; the decision to keep Livia off the coinage is more likely to be due to Augustus' respect for Roman conservatism (when it suited him) and his unwillingness to imply a constitutional role for Livia.⁴² The sharing of public honours between Livia and Octavia was another method by which Augustus could promote the imperial women without being seen to place one

⁴⁰ Ovid, *Fasti* 1.637-1.650; Barrett, *Livia*, pp. 315-316.

⁴¹ For further exploration of the post-consecration imagery of the Divae Augustae, see pages 253-276.

⁴² Barrett, *Livia*, p. 141.

higher than all others. Bestowing the right to be depicted in statuary upon Octavia as well as Livia was one of the first acts of his principate after the defeat of Antony, even before his own triumph. He also presented both women with the right to administer their own affairs without interference from a male guardian, and the same sacrosanctity as a tribune.⁴³

The *nodus* hairstyle, worn in much of Livia's portraiture throughout the reign of Augustus, was probably invented during the late republic, and became a symbol of respectable Roman womanhood throughout the early empire because of its association with the women of the Julian family.⁴⁴ Particularly because of its association with Antony's wronged wife Octavia, the *nodus* style is seen to represent the strong contrast between the virtues of Rome and the excesses of Egypt.⁴⁵ The style, in which the hair is pulled back tightly into a low bun/braid arrangement at the nape of the neck with a roll of hair (the *nodus*) worn high on the forehead, gives a severe but nonetheless feminine image of restrained modesty.

In Livia's portraits, her clothes are usually plain and her neck unadorned. Both Livia and Augustus made a point of avoiding luxurious jewellery and dress, donating valuable spoils of war to temples rather than wearing them personally, thereby implicitly criticising those who enjoyed such fashions.⁴⁶ Augustus chose not to remove the statue of Cleopatra from the temple of Venus Genetrix in the Forum of Julius Caesar after the defeat of Egypt; instead, he made a political point by commissioning statues of Livia and Octavia to stand beside Cleopatra in the temple.

⁴³ Dio 49.38.1

⁴⁴ **Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 4.**

⁴⁵ Kleiner, "Imperial Women as Patrons," p. 53.

⁴⁶ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 44.

He then hung a pair of pearl earrings that had belonged to the real Cleopatra in the ears of the statue of Venus in that same temple, making it clear that such expensive baubles were fit only for a goddess, not a living woman. This symbolic act implied that the Julian Venus had triumphed over the Egyptian Cleopatra.⁴⁷ By placing Octavia and Livia beside the image of Cleopatra instead of simply removing her statue, Augustus was drawing a clear comparison between the demure matrons of his family and the decadent Eastern Queen. Even when statuary required Livia to represent abundance and prosperity for Rome rather than severe modesty, her image was garlanded with floral wreaths and laurel leaves rather than jewels, evoking the “Golden Age” virtues without great expense or ostentation.⁴⁸

Livia also has the distinction of being the Roman imperial woman who was most celebrated and promoted after her death, not only by her immediate relatives, but even after the Julio-Claudian dynasty had ended. In many cases this was due to her posthumous deification, as will be discussed at length in Chapter 5, but in some cases it was still Livia the woman who was held up as a symbol of imperial womanhood. During the reign of Trajan, at the same time that the unflattering literary portraits of Livia by Suetonius and Tacitus were available for distribution, Livia’s portrait was included among those of Augustus and Vespasian in the Forum of Trajan, a monument designed to associate the current regime with the most positive and celebrated figures of previous dynasties.⁴⁹

The modesty and wifely loyalty that formed such a strong part of Livia’s public image was likewise reflected and prioritised in the public image of the women who

⁴⁷ Kleiner, “Imperial Women as Patrons” pp. 37-38.

⁴⁸ **Figure 3, Figure 4.**

⁴⁹ Seelentag, *Taten und tugenden traians*, pp. 358-359.

received that title after her death. Like Livia, Antonia was famous for her devotion to the virtue of *pudicitia*; unlike Livia she was undeniably an *univira*. Antonia, a woman renowned for her virtue and chastity, was only twenty-seven at the death of her husband Drusus and yet refused to remarry despite significant pressure from the emperor.⁵⁰ Josephus implies that the emperor in question is Tiberius, although Drusus died during the reign of Augustus and it is likely that the first few years of Antonia's widowhood would have been those in which she was most pressured to remarry, for the sake of publicly supporting Augustus' own marriage legislation; by the time Tiberius came to power, Antonia's refusal to remarry would have been well and truly established, and would surely have been less of a political issue. Another commentator, Valerius Maximus, declared that Antonia's feminine merits surpassed the fame of the men in her family, and praised her for embracing widowhood rather than seeking another husband.⁵¹ The *Consolatio ad Liviam*, a panegyric to Livia upon the death of her son Drusus, is equally effusive about Drusus' widow, calling her Juno to his Jove and his last and only love, as well as a worthy daughter-in-law to his mother.⁵² Antonia is remembered as a virtuous woman whose dedication to sexual morality was so great that when her own daughter Livilla was caught committing adultery with Sejanus, Antonia not only revealed Sejanus' conspiracy to the emperor Tiberius but also starved her own daughter to death, echoing the punishment inflicted on Vestal Virgins for unchastity.⁵³ Antonia appears on the Ara Pacis in the role of the wife of Drusus, before her public image became more noticeably focused around her roles as priestess, Augusta and imperial mother.⁵⁴ She is typically presented in statuary as a modestly clad figure, often in the matronal *stola*

⁵⁰ Joseph. *Jewish Antiquities* 18.180.

⁵¹ Val. Max. 4.3.3.

⁵² *Cons. ad Liv.* 299-304.

⁵³ Dio 58.11.7.

⁵⁴ Figure 14.

that so strongly implies *pudicitia*.⁵⁵

Agrippina Minor was the first woman with a less than pristine sexual reputation to receive the title of Augusta. From her youth she was surrounded by scandalous rumours about her relationship with her brother Caligula.⁵⁶ She was said to have embarked on an affair with Claudius before their marriage, and this relationship was also thought by many to be incestuous, despite the legislative changes Claudius made in order to have the marriage made possible.⁵⁷ After Claudius' death it was Agrippina's relationship with her son Nero that was put under scrutiny, with further rumours of incest surrounding her name.⁵⁸ Agrippina is portrayed in the literary sources as having many sexual relationships: apart from her brother and husbands, Tacitus cites Lepidus, Tigellinus and Pallas as alleged lovers of Agrippina, while Dio cites Lepidus, Tigellinus, Pallas and Seneca.⁵⁹ In most cases, the motivation cited for these affairs is Agrippina's political ambition. The literary portrait of Agrippina contrasts with the idealised model set by Livia and Antonia not only in lack of sexual restraint but also in terms of wifely duty, as the literary sources continually question her personal loyalty to Claudius. Seneca, Josephus, Juvenal, Tacitus, Suetonius and Philostratus repeat the story (either as an unsubstantiated rumour or as an acknowledged fact) that Claudius was murdered by Agrippina.⁶⁰ Such a story should dramatically erode her credibility as a good wife, and yet the sources also maintain that Agrippina's status continued to draw upon her position as the widow and

⁵⁵ **Figure 15.**

⁵⁶ Suet. *Gaius* 24.1-24.3; Dio 59.26.5.

⁵⁷ Dio 60.31.6; Suet. *Claud.* 26.3; Tac. *Ann.* 12.5.1; Juv. *Sat.* 2.29; Seneca, *Oct.* 141-142.

⁵⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 14.2; Suet. *Nero* 28.2; Dio 61.11.3-61.11.4.

⁵⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 12.65.4, 14.2.4, 14.57.1, 15.50.4; Dio 59.22.6, 59.23.9, 61.3.2, 61.10.1.

⁶⁰ Seneca, *Oct.* 89-98; Jos. *J.A.* 20.148; Juv. *Sat.* 6.660; Tac. *Ann.* 12.66-12.67; Suet. *Claud.* 44, Dio 60.34.1-60.34.4; Philostratus, *Apoll.* 5.32.

priestess of Divus Claudius.⁶¹

As with Livia and the other female members of the Julio-Claudian imperial family, we are forced rely on these literary sources for our picture of Agrippina, even though we know of their limitations. As with Livia, the majority of literary sources concerning Agrippina's career were only written after her death, and may well reflect later biases rather than those contemporary to her. As Barrett notes, Agrippina's character was unlikely to be promoted or restored during the Flavian reign, as she had personally impeded the career of Vespasian.⁶² Despite the unflattering literary portrait of Agrippina as a sexual predator, an incestuous mother and a black widow, Agrippina's public image relied heavily on her representation as the wife and widow of Claudius, and she worked to defend that image. She was the first imperial wife to share coins with her husband, thus sharing a measure of his imperial status, and having her share in that status publicly acknowledged.⁶³ The only precedent for this pairing of husband and wife on Roman coins are the privately minted Antony-Octavia coins of the second triumvirate.⁶⁴ Even Tacitus acknowledged that politically, Agrippina supported her husband's policies even after his death, and we know from Dio that as the wife of Claudius, she was included in the daily ritual of *salutatio*, again sharing in a measure of the homage paid to her husband.⁶⁵ Agrippina's numismatic image as the imperial wife included many elements in homage to the goddess Ceres, who also appeared on Claudius' own coinage.⁶⁶ Agrippina wears the *corona spicea* ("corn-ear crown") on many of these coins,

⁶¹ Tac. *Ann.* 12.69.4, 13.2.6; Suet. *Claud.* 45, *Nero* 9, *Vesp.* 9.1.

⁶² Barrett, *Agrippina*, p. 199.

⁶³ *BMC I Claudius* 72-78.

⁶⁴ **Figure 1**; Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 293.

⁶⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 13.5; Dio 61.33.1.

⁶⁶ *BMC I Claudius* 136-139, 197-198; *RIC I Claudius* 67, 90; Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 290.

becoming the first living imperial woman to do so; perhaps significantly, the *corona spicea* was also an element of Claudius' mother Antonia's posthumous public image.⁶⁷ Elements such as these all serve to evoke marital concord and to suggest Agrippina's loyalty and support for her husband's regime.⁶⁸

Like Livia, Agrippina became the priestess of her husband's cult after his deification; unlike Livia, Agrippina had to fight to preserve Claudius' memory as a good emperor, as Nero made posthumous attacks of ridicule against his adoptive father.⁶⁹ Agrippina took centre stage at Claudius' grand funeral, modelled on that of Augustus, and later commissioned a temple to Divus Claudius, which Nero destroyed before it could be completed.⁷⁰ Agrippina's reputation as a wife may have been forever sullied in the literary sources that were written after her death, but it is clear that her public image during her lifetime relied on a display of uxorial piety.

Poppaea's literary reputation, like that of Agrippina, is one coloured by sexual immorality rather than chastity and *pudicitia*. In Seneca's *Octavia*, she is represented as a proud and greedy courtesan who encourages Nero to kill his mother as well as his wife.⁷¹ Tacitus describes Poppaea as depraved, incapable of love and uncaring of whether her lovers were married men or single, and yet he does concede that in public, she appeared respectable.⁷² This latter comment is worthy of mention

⁶⁷ **Figure 12, Figure 20**; RIC I *Claudius* 81; BMC I *Claudius* 112-114; Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 290.

⁶⁸ The reliability as to the interpretation of numismatic imagery to determine imperial policy is a matter of scholarly debate; the repetition of particular images in relation to a particular member of the imperial family, however, is often too overt to be ignored. See pages 7 and 180-182 of this thesis for further discussion on the significance and problematic nature of reverse-imagery in relation to the public image of the imperial women.

⁶⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 13.3; Suet. *Nero* 9; Barrett, *Agrippina*, p. 147.

⁷⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 12.69.4, 13.2.6; Suet. *Claud.* 45, *Nero* 9, *Vesp.* 9.1.

⁷¹ Sen. *Oct.* 125-129, 131-133.

⁷² Tac. *Ann.* 13.45.

because it suggests that at even a time when the emperor is known for being decadent, extravagant and utterly uncaring of moral niceties, and the imperial wife is a woman known to have been an adulteress and concubine before her marriage, the appearance of respectability is still valued.

Poppaea was certainly not worthy of any claim to *univira* status: she had been married twice before Nero, the second marriage being to the future emperor Otho, in an attempt to mask the affair she and Nero had been carrying on for some time.⁷³

While Tacitus presents a particularly unattractive literary portrait of Poppaea, and discusses the possibility that Nero was responsible for her death, the excessive degree to which he mourned her suggests at least a certain level of marital concord.⁷⁴

They were presented publicly as a united pair, particularly on the *Augustus Augusta* coin type which depicts the imperial couple not only on the same face of the same coin, but with an implied equality of their titles.⁷⁵ The presentation of this imperial couple on the *Augustus Augusta* coins is significant in many ways, particularly the divine attributes such as the *paterae* in their hands, Nero's radiate crown and sceptre, and Poppaea's cornucopia, which evokes the goddess Concordia. While this is a new kind of coin representation for an imperial couple, the attributes link back to previous examples of imperial public image; Nero's radiate crown had first been worn by Caligula, while Poppaea's cornucopia had long been associated with the Augustae.

⁷³ Suet. *Otho* 3.

⁷⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 16.6. Mayer presents the stories surrounding of Poppaea's death as being part of the traditional invective against tyrants. In an unpublished paper presented orally in 2000, Wood expounds upon this discussion, relating it also to the representation of Julia Titi as the victim of Domitian, and suggesting that while Nero was certainly capable of such an act, we must not discount the possibility that it was a literary device rather than a historical fact. Martin presents the surprisingly vehement contention that Poppaea *must* have died from natural causes relating to pregnancy and childbirth, citing the conflicting reports by Tacitus (one saying Poppaea was poisoned, the other kicked in the stomach) as well as the lack of available gynaecological information available at the time. Mayer, "What Caused Poppaea's Death?" pp. 248-249; Martin, "Les recits tactieens des crimes de Neron," pp. 81-82; Wood, "The Incredible, Vanishing Wives of Nero," pp. 4-5.

⁷⁵ **Figure 23**; *RIC I Nero* 41; *BMC I Nero* 52-55.

As became more common in later imperial portraits, Poppaea's face appears to have been assimilated to that of Nero on some of her coin types. On one eastern coin issue, she is depicted with similar nose and chin lines and a very similar facial expression to her husband, although the assimilation has not gone as far as with later examples such as Domitia and Domitian; Poppaea still retains a relatively slender neck and feminine shape to her head.⁷⁶ This kind of assimilation would have had the effect of suggesting concord between the imperial couple, by providing a visual sense of similarity between the two.

As the only unmarried female ever to receive the title of Augusta, Claudia is exempt from any discussion of a representation of wifely virtue. Of relevance here, however, is the issue of virginal rather than matronal chastity. Claudia's representation as a goddess emphasised her virginal status as by naming her *Diva Claudia Virgo*.⁷⁷

At the close of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, therefore, we have five women who have been named Augusta, two of whom have been publicly celebrated for their wifely virtues and their status as *univira* or honorary *univira*. Another two of these women had reputations as sexual predators and adulteresses, although their public reputations as imperial wives still relied strongly on a presentation of *concordia*. The fifth, having received the title as a baby, cannot be thought to have earned the status of Augusta through any kind of moral or immoral wifely behaviour, though chastity was emphasised in her posthumous public image.

⁷⁶ Figure 24.

⁷⁷ *PIR*² 1061 *Claudia Augusta*; see also *CIL* 6.2044 for an example of *Diva Claudia Virgo* inscriptions.

The public image of the sixth Augusta, Sextilia the mother of Vitellius, followed the pattern established by Livia and Antonia, rather than that of Agrippina and Poppaea. Suetonius refers to Sextilia upon her widowhood as being a worthy woman of a good quality family.⁷⁸ Tacitus describes her as a woman whose virtues were an example of the ancient ways, and notes that she never took pleasure in the misfortunes of others.⁷⁹ This is given in pointed contrast to her daughter-in-law, who was not similarly restrained. Both Tacitus and Dio describe an incident that emphasises Sextilia's preference for modesty over imperial pomp: when Vitellius chose to take the name Germanicus for himself she reputedly responded with the words, "I bore a son named Vitellius, not Germanicus."⁸⁰ The overall impression is of a good, modest wife and mother who was somewhat bewildered by the sudden elevation of her family, and was fortunate to die before seeing the fate that would befall her sons.

Of the three Flavian Augustae, Flavia Domitilla is the most obscure, as is evident from the debate in modern scholarship as to which member of the family she actually was. If, as discussed previously, she was the wife and not the daughter of Vespasian, the use of her public image makes greater sense, even though she was not publicly acclaimed or deified until after Vespasian's own death.⁸¹ This would mean that Domitilla's primary role as a *diva* of the reign of Titus is that of imperial mother, consort to the deified father of the emperor. Domitilla is physically assimilated to Vespasian in numismatic portraiture that, as with Nero and Poppaea, implies a level of concord and domestic harmony between them.⁸² A coin type from Domitian's reign even places Diva Domitilla on the reverse of a Divus Vespasianus obverse,

⁷⁸ Suet. *Vit.* 3.

⁷⁹ Tac. *Hist.* 2.64.

⁸⁰ Tac. *Hist.* 2.64; Dio 64.4.5.

⁸¹ See pages 48-50 of this thesis.

⁸² **Figure 27, Figure 28.**

promoting the two as husband as wife as well as the emperor's divine parents.⁸³

Domitilla also has a *Concordia Augusta* reverse type that, along with the peacock of Juno, presents her as a figure who symbolises marriage in general as well as the *concordia* of the Augustan family.⁸⁴

If Diva Domitilla Augusta was in fact the sister of Titus, the use of her image on the coinage is more difficult to read. It may represent a lost opportunity, as with the posthumous celebration of Claudia Augusta or Julia Titi; suggesting that the children of the younger Domitilla may have been intended as potential heirs. However, the important aspect of the posthumous promotion of both Claudia Augusta and Julia Titi is that they were the only children of their fathers. The only precedent for such an honour for a sister, then, is Drusilla, who was not made Augusta. If the Diva Domitilla Augusta celebrated by Titus was his sister and not his mother, it is hard to imagine any motive for this beyond sentimentality, as neither her husband nor children were granted public honours.

Both of the Augustae associated with Domitian -- his wife Domitia Longina and his niece Julia -- have long been associated with sexual immorality. Suetonius tells us that Domitia was taken away from her first husband in order to marry Domitian, an act reminiscent of Livia's marriage to Augustus.⁸⁵ He goes on to relate how Domitian divorced Domitia because of her love affair with an actor named Paris, but that Domitian later recalled Domitia to renew their marriage, claiming it was due to persistent popular demand.⁸⁶ Dio elaborates on this story, claiming that Domitian

⁸³ *BMC II Domitian* 68.

⁸⁴ *RIC II Titus* 70; *BMC II Titus* 136.

⁸⁵ Suet. *Dom.* 1.

⁸⁶ Suet. *Dom.* 3.

had to be dissuaded from executing Domitia for adultery, that he murdered Paris, that he took his niece Julia as mistress during the separation with Domitia, and that he continued that relationship after his wife's return.⁸⁷ Suetonius supports the theory of a relationship between Domitian and Julia, claiming that he had refused to marry her when she was offered to him, preferring Domitia, but that he then seduced Julia as soon as she married someone else, and once he was emperor consorted with her passionately and openly; Suetonius also claims that Julia's death was due to an abortion Domitian had forced upon her when she became pregnant with his baby.⁸⁸ The tale of Julia's seduction and death is one of the more popular anecdotes related about Domitian. Both Pliny and Juvenal use the story to illustrate Domitian's hypocrisy in reviving strict adultery laws and condemning a Vestal for unchastity when he himself had committed adultery with his own niece.⁸⁹

Vinson "reassesses" the reputations of Julia and Domitia, using historical evidence to discount both Julia's death by abortion and Domitia's affair with Paris as being "invective fantasy;" anecdotes designed to discredit Domitian.⁹⁰ Vinson's case against the historical truth of these stories is convincingly made, and yet it assumes a certain degree of anti-female hysteria in the ancient sources which further examination of those sources fails to uncover. While the anecdotes told by Suetonius, Dio, Pliny and Juvenal provide evidence of the unchaste activities of Julia or Domitia, both women are essentially portrayed as passive victims of Domitian, whose lack of appropriate chastity or fidelity is beyond their direct control.

⁸⁷ Dio 67.3.1-67.3.2.

⁸⁸ Suet. *Dom.* 22.

⁸⁹ Juv. *Sat.* 2.29-2.33; Pliny *Epist.* 4.11.

⁹⁰ Vinson, "Domitia Longina, Julia Titi," p. 438.

None of these primary sources is known for its tendency to sympathise with unchaste women. Suetonius portrays Agrippina as a young seductress who lures Claudius into an incestuous union; he also refers to Urgulanilla's extravagant lust (*libidinum probra*) and describes Messalina's deeds as both disgraceful and dishonourable (*flagitia atque dedecora*).⁹¹ Dio calls Messalina an adulteress and a harlot, and agrees that Agrippina was the sexual aggressor in the relationship with her uncle.⁹² Even the usually-tolerant Pliny the Younger is censorious when he is involved with the trial of an adulterous tribune's wife, declaring that she had defiled (*maculaverat*) her own position and that of her husband by her affair with a centurion.⁹³ Juvenal, unsurprisingly, has much to say on the subject of adulteresses in his Satire devoted to the misconduct of women, describing Messalina as *meretrix Augusta* ("whore-Augusta") as well as condemning a mother who encourages her daughter's extra-marital affairs.⁹⁴

In contrast, Suetonius explains Domitia's divorce as being caused by *amor* rather than using a harsher term to emphasise her role as an adulteress; he also places Domitian squarely in the role of Julia's seducer, taking advantage of Julia's vulnerable situation after the deaths of her husband and father.⁹⁵ Dio glosses over Domitia's affair, preferring to focus on Domitian's violent reaction, first wanting to have her executed, then murdering her lover in the street.⁹⁶ Perhaps most telling is Dio's attitude towards Domitia's involvement in the assassination of her husband, surely the most clear-cut case of marital disloyalty: Dio softens the information that

⁹¹ Suet. *Claud.* 26.

⁹² Dio 61.31.1, 61.31.6.

⁹³ Pliny *Epist.* 6.31.

⁹⁴ Juv. *Sat.* 6.118, 229-238.

⁹⁵ Suet. *Dom.* 3.22.

⁹⁶ Dio 67.3.1-67.3.2.

Domitia not only knew of the plot but also assisted it by telling us that she was a victim of Domitian's hatred and in constant fear of her life.⁹⁷ Dio's treatment of Julia is equally passive, offering no overt condemnation of her involvement with her uncle.⁹⁸ Pliny portrays Julia as an unwilling victim of Domitian's unnatural practices, Domitian defiling his niece and then causing her death by forcing her to have an abortion.⁹⁹ Even Juvenal, who spices up the incest story by referring to Julia's string of abortions, is more interested in portraying Domitian as the sexual predator than commenting on the status of Julia's virtue.¹⁰⁰

Vinson's assertion, then, that "Julia and Domitia remain under the cloud of their association with [Domitian] as the victim and perpetrator of gross offenses against sexual morality" is more relevant to the attitudes of the secondary sources dealing with the characters of Domitia and Julia, than those of the primary sources.¹⁰¹ The idea that these women had invective directed against them is a modern myth which is contradicted by the text of the extant ancient sources, where their association with the tyrannical Domitian actually served to make Julia and Domitia more sympathetic characters whose lack of *pudicitia* was either beyond their control, or justifiable. That Domitia remained in a position of public (if unofficial) honour under Trajan demonstrates that her reputation as an adulteress, a murderess and a disloyal wife was mitigated by the fact that all these acts had been perpetrated against the loathed figure of Domitian.

Domitia's public image centres around her role as the traditional *matrona*, on the

⁹⁷ Dio. 67.15.2.

⁹⁸ Dio. 67.3.2.

⁹⁹ Pliny *Epist.* 4.11.

¹⁰⁰ Juv. *Sat.* 2. 31-38.

¹⁰¹ Vinson, "Domitia Longina, Julia Titi," p. 431.

state coinage as well as sculptural portraits.¹⁰² She is associated with goddesses such as Juno and Concordia Augusta, who are patrons of wives as well as marriage.¹⁰³ Domitia has three distinct portrait types, as identified by Varner, those being: wife of a Caesar, wife of an Augustus, and imperial widow. The first portrait type belongs to her time as imperial daughter-in-law, during the reign of Vespasian. Given that Vespasian's eldest son was not married at this time, but infamously dallying with the foreign queen Berenice, and Vespasian's own domestic arrangements revolved around his freedwoman mistress Caenis, it is hardly surprising that there was a strong emphasis on the modest, wifely behaviour of Domitian's aristocratic Roman wife.¹⁰⁴ Varner argues convincingly that one particularly significant example of this first, pre-Augusta portrait type is a Capitoline bust which Zanker had previously not identified as Domitia.¹⁰⁵ While the hair is as ornate as Flavian fashion required, this particular portrait is otherwise similar to those of Livia and Antonia in its simplicity; the young Domitia wears no jewellery or hair ornaments, and is clad in simple draperies. Another example of this early Domitia type shows her veiled, suggesting both modesty and religious piety.¹⁰⁶ Like Augustus, Vespasian's reign was characterised by an emphasis on restraint and austerity, which makes it quite credible that any public representation of Domitia during her father-in-law's reign would attempt to emulate the female portraits of the Augustan Age.

It is with Domitia's second portrait type, as Augusta and imperial consort, that she joins her husband on the state coinage. Most of her coin issues refer to Domitian's

¹⁰² Varner, "Domitia Longina," pp. 188-189.

¹⁰³ See pages 208, 215 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁴ Suet. *Vesp.* 3, *Titus* 7.

¹⁰⁵ **Figure 34**; Varner, "Domitia Longina," pp. 192-193.

¹⁰⁶ **Figure 33**.

name and titles as well as her own, closely associating her public image with his.¹⁰⁷ The physical verisimilitude that can be seen in portraits of Domitia and Domitian throughout the reigns of Vespasian and Titus as well as Domitian's own reign also serves to emphasise Domitia's role as wife and consort of Domitian.¹⁰⁸ As with previous examples of this technique, such as Nero and Poppaea, and Vespasian and Domitilla, this verisimilitude can be read as an attempt to create the image of domestic concord in the eyes of the public.¹⁰⁹ As Mattingly and Sydenham note, Domitia's joint coinage with her husband is limited to the early part of his reign, and the coins she occupies alone belong to the beginning and end of his reign, with a gap of time in between to represent the period of repudiation before he welcomed her back into her role as imperial wife.¹¹⁰ According to Varner, every surviving example of this Domitia Augusta portrait type in statuary incorporates a diadem, showing that godly attributes, once exceptional in female imperial statuary, have become the accepted norm.¹¹¹ This does not translate to numismatic portraits, however; the diadem does not commonly appear on coin portraits of living imperial women until the Severan period. The appearance of the diadem on the portraiture, however, suggests either that restraint and modesty is less of an issue for the public depictions of the Flavian Augustae under Domitian, or indeed that the definition of appropriate modesty for an imperial wife was changing at this time.

As with Livia and Agrippina, Domitia is accused in the ancient sources of murdering her husband, surely the greatest of domestic sins. Unlike her predecessors, the

¹⁰⁷ *BMC II Domitian* 58-68, 501-503.

¹⁰⁸ **Figure 35, Figure 36;** Varner, "Domitia Longina," pp. 190-192.

¹⁰⁹ If, of course, Diva Domitilla Augusta is the younger Domitilla, then her resemblance to her father is not remarkable.

¹¹⁰ Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC II*, p. 150.

¹¹¹ Varner, "Domitia Longina," pp. 194-196.

unpopularity of Domitian has transformed his wife's role in this scandal into that of patriotic heroine rather than that of a domestic transgressor. This is reflected in the fact that Domitia continued to be represented in public statuary during the post-Domitian years that remained of her lifetime, particularly during the reign of Trajan.¹¹²

Julia Titi's role as wife barely registers in her public image, which revolves instead around her relationships to the emperors Titus and Domitian. Her marriage and indeed her husband do not have any overt dynastic relevance, although this would certainly have changed if she had borne a child who could be adopted by her father or uncle. Julia's close association with Vesta suggests, as it did for Livia, that the virtues of chastity, modesty and domesticity were important to her public image; the appearance of Concordia Augusta and the peacocks of Juno on Julia's coinage emphasises, as it does for Domitilla and Domitia, the importance of marital virtue and the *concordia* of the current imperial family to Julia's own public reputation, no matter what dark secrets her private reputation held. Modesty was also a characteristic feature of the public art that featured Julia's portrait from her father's reign onwards; she wears no jewellery on coins or the majority of her statue portraits, and her youth is emphasised in these along with a simplicity of dress and style.¹¹³ Julia's later portraiture, both public statues and in private artworks such as cameos, does however include types with diadems and (in the case of the cameos) jewellery at her neck and ears.¹¹⁴ It is more than likely that these more elaborate and ornamented portraits belong not only to the period after her father's death, but also after her own. Her Flavian crest of curls is much higher in these posthumous

¹¹² Varner, "Domitia Longina," p. 206; Matheson, "The Elder Claudia," p. 132.

¹¹³ **Figure 29, Figure 30;** *BMC II Titus* 144.

¹¹⁴ **Figure 31, Figure 32.**

portraits, and her overall countenance is more mature than the girlish images of her father's reign.

At the close of the Flavian dynasty, then, we see that the importance of *pudicitia* to the Augustae is of the highest significance in the case of the imperial wife, though the appearance of *pudicitia* is still relevant important to the public image any woman who is a mother or potential mother of imperial heirs. Domestic transgressions, whether they are sexual or murderous in nature, can be mitigated if the husband, even an emperor, is seen as an unworthy figure. Even the most misogynistic of ancient sources are all willing to overlook an imperial woman's failure to achieve perfect wifely behaviour in order to more effectively savage the character of a male political figure of whom they greatly disapprove. As was clear particularly in the case of Livia, but also with the other Julio-Claudian Augustae, the public image of the Augusta still relies on traditional wifely, womanly and domestic virtues even when this public image is directly challenged by rumours or scandals about that particular woman's personal life; the private and public Augusta remains somewhat separate, with the real woman's actual activities deemed less important to the imperial family propaganda than her public representations.

There is a popular theory that the unpleasant depiction of the Julio-Claudian women in Suetonius and Tacitus was due to an unflattering comparison between their behaviour and that of the demure and obedient Plotina, who was all that the Romans wished an emperor's wife to be.¹¹⁵ It was during the Trajanic and Hadrianic reigns that the imperial women of the Julio-Claudian era were so strongly represented as

¹¹⁵ Laurence, "History and Female power," p. 132.

immoral, sexually transgressive women in the literary sources. However, if the Julio-Claudian and Flavian women are all portrayed in a negative light to enhance the public image of Plotina, then what does that say about Plotina? She is certainly one of the most publicly-lauded imperial women in the literary sources, although that could be because so many of our surviving literary sources date from the period of Trajan's rule. Pliny, for instance, devotes two chapters of his *Panegyric* to Plotina and her sister-in-law Marciana, describing how their positive and virtuous reputation enhances Trajan's public stature. Of Plotina, he enthuses:

Eadem quam modica cultu, quam parca comitatu, quam ciuilis incesu.

Mariti hoc opus, qui ita imbuit, ita instituit; nam uxori sufficit obsequii gloria.¹¹⁶

How modest she is in her attire; how moderate in her retinue; how unpretentious in her way of walking. This is the work of her husband, who has initiated her thus and taught her thus; for an obedient wife is glory enough.

Marciana is also greatly complimented in the *Panegyric*. Just as Plotina is presented purely in her role as a suitable wife for Trajan, Marciana is portrayed as the most suitable sister for the emperor, and as a suitable partner for Plotina's public life:

suspiciunt inuicem, inuicem cedunt, cumque te utraque effusissime diligit, nihil sua putant interesse, utram tu magis ames. idem utrique propositum, idem tenor uitae, nihilque, ex quo sentias duas esse; te enim imitari, te subsequi student. ideo utraque mores eosdem, quia utraque tuos habet; inde moderatio, inde etiam perpetua

¹¹⁶ Pliny *Pan.* 83.7.

securitas. neque enim unquam periclitabuntur esse privatae, quae non desierunt.¹¹⁷

They have mutual respect and consideration and each loves you most effusively; neither thinks that it matters that you might love one more than the other. Each has the same purpose, the same direction in life; because of this, you might think that they are not separate women. They strive to imitate and follow your example. So they have the same habits because each has your habits; hence their restraint; hence their perpetual composure. They are in no danger of ever being private citizens, these women who will never leave you.

It is also in this work that Pliny refers to the ultimate display of modesty on the part of Plotina and Marciana in refusing the title of Augusta, and therefore proving themselves worthy of it:

quid enim laudabilius feminis, quam si uerum honorem non in splendore titulorum, sed in iudiciis hominum reponant, magnisque nominibus pares se faciant, et dum recusant?¹¹⁸

For what is more laudable for women than if they place true honour not in the splendour of titles, but in the opinion of people, and if they make themselves equal to great names though they refuse them?

The association that Pliny makes between honorific titles and public modesty is particularly important, as it implies that the title Augusta is something imperial

¹¹⁷ Pliny *Pan.* 84.4-84.5.

¹¹⁸ Pliny *Pan.* 84.8.

women can only earn by conforming to certain ideals of female behaviour. That Plotina and Marciana are themselves credited with rejecting the honour reveals that the imperial women controlled their own public image, independently of the emperor; or, at least, that it was not inconceivable to the public that they do so. No mention is made of whether Trajan approved or disapproved of Plotina and Marciana's initial rejection of a title which would reflect honour upon him as the head of their household; instead, he silently receives the benefit of being presented as a man whose sister and wife have been publicly lauded for their exceptional modesty.

Plotina does not appear on the coinage until quite late in Trajan's reign, in the same year as the death and deification of his sister Marciana, whose new status as a *diva* was also commemorated on coins; the close interaction between the public images of these two women during Marciana's lifetime, is therefore preserved even in death.¹¹⁹ Only when coins were presented posthumously in honour of Diva Marciana Augusta, was the living imperial wife Plotina Augusta honoured with her own numismatic type. She usually appears with her husband's name alongside her own name and image on these coin types, it still being rare for an imperial wife or imperial woman to have coins struck entirely in her own right.¹²⁰ While the reverse images on these coin types vary, the legend usually displays Trajan's lengthy list of titles.¹²¹ It is clear from this that Plotina's public image revolves strictly around her subservient role as wife to the emperor. A Plotina coin type from the reign of Trajan is specifically dedicated to Pudicitia on the reverse, the veiled and draped figure of the divinity presiding over her own altar, with the legend *Ara Pudic.* added to the usual

¹¹⁹ Mattingly, *BMC III*, lxii; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 115.

¹²⁰ *BMC III Trajan* 525-530, 646, 1080-1081; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 116.

¹²¹ *BMC III Trajan* 525-530, 646.

reverse legend of Plotina's coins, the list of her husband's titles.¹²² This coin is believed to commemorate the foundation of an altar to Pudicitia in Rome, a project for which Plotina herself is given credit.¹²³ The implication is that Plotina, like Livia before her, is acknowledging the sacred duties of the married women in Rome to support and worship goddesses who have always been the responsibility of the *matronae*. By using either her own money or imperial funds, Plotina's role as patron of an altar to Pudicitia can be seen as further evidence that the Augustae and especially the imperial wives of Rome were expected to take a leading role in such matronal religious responsibilities, and also that Pudicitia was a goddess (as well as virtue) of vital significance to the public image of the imperial wife and the Augusta.

In his *Panegyric*, Pliny waxes lyrical about the loving marriage between Trajan and Plotina as emperor and emperor's wife, describing how position and success have not altered their relationship.¹²⁴ Harmony and concord are ongoing themes within the public image of Plotina, not only the concord between herself and her husband Trajan but also that between herself and Marciana. As with previous imperial wives, Plotina is physically assimilated to Trajan so that their portraits display a certain "family" resemblance to each other, further implying concord between the imperial couple.¹²⁵

Only after Trajan's death is Plotina's chaste image challenged in the literary sources, with a rumour that she secured Hadrian's appointment because she was in love with

¹²² *BMC III Trajan* 529.

¹²³ Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 122.

¹²⁴ Pliny *Pan.* 83.6.

¹²⁵ **Figure 37, Figure 38**; Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, p. 212.

him.¹²⁶ As Cresswell notes, Plotina's previously impeccable image is suddenly (once she is no longer an imperial wife) diverted into the traditional cliché of the imperial woman: the devious, ambitious and promiscuous female taking an unhealthy interest in the imperial succession.¹²⁷ Plotina's public image on the state coinage during Hadrian's reign, however, continues to emphasise Plotina as a wife and a figure who embodies the ideal of marital concord.¹²⁸ She is represented on coins with the deified Trajan as his living wife as well as one half of a divine couple, *Divis Parentibus*, these latter coins presumably being released after her death and deification.¹²⁹

We know little of Marciana's life before her brother succeeded to the throne, and know of only one husband, C. Salinius Matidius Patruinus; by the time of Trajan's succession, Marciana was a widow and remained so until her death.¹³⁰ Her daughter Matidia's marital history is less certain. While Matidia was singled out as an exceptional *univira*, by now a very old-fashioned concept, for remaining devoted to the memory of her husband after his death, there is a question arising from her daughters' names (or rather from the names given to their freedmen) which suggests that her elder daughter Mindia Matidia had a different father to her second daughter Vibia Sabina.¹³¹ However, this would only be the case if the precise rules of paternal names were still being tightly observed, which was by no means assured during the early second century. As with Julia Titi, the emphasis on the domestic virtues of Marciana and Matidia generally does not promote them as wives so much as in their

¹²⁶ Dio 69.1.2; *Hist. Aug. Hadrian* 4.9-4.10.

¹²⁷ Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 106.

¹²⁸ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p. 160.

¹²⁹ *RIC II Hadrian* 29-33, 232a-232b, 387; Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, p. 191.

¹³⁰ Boatwright, "Imperial Women," p. 517.

¹³¹ Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, p.45; Boatwright, "Imperial Women," p. 517.

roles as the emperor's relatives, which is probably due to their husbands' political insignificance; Matidia's wifely reputation is given greater prominence than that of her mother, probably in order to reflect well upon her daughter Sabina once she entered into public life.

The modern assumption that the imperial wife is of greater significance to an emperor's public image than the other women of his family -- even those women who have the title *Augustae* -- has meant that Marciana and Matidia's public image has received less scholarly study than that of Plotina and Sabina, despite the contemporary importance of these women. Kleiner's comprehensive *Roman Sculpture*, for example, devotes a separate section to the portraiture of Plotina and Sabina, but only refers to Marciana and Matidia in passing.¹³² It is only when including the portraiture of these women with that of Plotina that a full picture of the Trajanic representation of imperial femininity becomes clear. Like Plotina, Marciana's appearance in all examples of her public portraiture is that of a mature and matronly woman, and one with a strong familial resemblance to Trajan. Marciana's statue portraiture, as well as that of Plotina and Matidia, was characterised by modest draperies and strict, deliberately formal hairstyles.¹³³ The formality and artificiality of these hairstyles can be seen as a natural progression from the grandiose "toupets" of the Flavian era, in which the extravagant Flavian curls are tamed into styles that evoke the same sentiments as the formal *nodus* style of the Augustans. The effect is that no loose or natural hair be depicted, giving the women who wear this hairstyle a stiff and restrained appearance which is very much in accordance with the prioritising of the appearance of modesty and chastity in these

¹³² Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, p. 212, p. 241.

¹³³ **Figure 39, Figure 41, Figure 42, Figure 43, Figure 44**; Bartman, "Hair and the Artifice," pp. 10-11.

three Trajanic Augustae.

The modest style of the garments which the Trajanic Augustae wear in statue portraiture likewise contributes to their public image as representatives of Trajanic female values. Boatwright discusses the “retiring and chaste” characters of Plotina, Marciana and Sabina in the light of a statue group found at the Baths of Neptune, and contends that the impropriety of placing the emperor’s relatives in this context is an act of deliberate “naughtiness,” the modest figures of these Augustae being a departure from the usual erotic artwork to be found in baths.¹³⁴

Sabina was certainly a *univira*, since she married Hadrian at the age of twelve and died while still his wife; predeceasing her husband may make the title less morally meaningful than when it belongs to a widow who is firmly resisting the temptation to remarry, but the sacred status is nonetheless relevant. While Sabina barely appears in the literary sources, the inscriptional evidence portrays her as a loyal wife who followed her husband on his travels, hardly actions that would be expected of an imperial wife whose husband was completely uninterested in her, or antagonistic towards her, as modern scholarship generally suggests.¹³⁵ Sabina was not honoured on coins until 128 CE, the year in which Hadrian was named *Pater Patriae* and also the year in which she was made an Augusta, eleven years after her husband became emperor. From this point on Sabina becomes a far more vital part of Hadrian’s public propaganda; his familial focus previously had been on the promotion of his “parents” Plotina and Trajan rather than his wife, despite the fact that his marriage to the daughter of Matidia can be seen as a key reason for the acceptance of his

¹³⁴ Boatwright, “Just Window Dressing?” pp. 68-70.

¹³⁵ Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, p. 46.

legitimacy as Trajan's heir.¹³⁶ The presentation of marital concord remained at this time a significant element of the public image of the imperial couple. Sabina has many coin reverses dedicated to *Pietas Augusta* and *Pudicitia*, both of which support her role as a suitable wife for Hadrian - the *pontifex maximus* as well as *princeps*.¹³⁷ Mattingly interprets the *Pudicitia* reverse types of Sabina as suggesting not only that she as imperial wife is equal in honour to the Vestal Virgins, but also that she displayed the same degree of public chastity and modesty as the Vestals.¹³⁸

Modesty and chastity are key aspects to Sabina's public representation. The emphasis on restraint that was so prominent in Livia's public image can also be seen in the "peasant" style that often characterises Sabina's physical appearance in statuary.¹³⁹ Sabina's posthumous representation makes further reference to the concord between herself and Hadrian, with apotheosis artwork that represents Hadrian as the grieving widower. In one such sculptural relief, Sabina is carried to the heavens upon the back of Aeternitas, wearing a modesty veil that she holds with a gesture evoking *Pudicitia* as the personification of wifely virtue, as well as Hera/Juno in her capacity as patron goddess of marriage.¹⁴⁰

Kleiner and Matheson suggest that the hairstyles associated with Sabina's public image are a rejection of, or at least a contrast with, Plotina's ornate and tiered hairstyles.¹⁴¹ The most common type of portrait hairstyle associated with Sabina

¹³⁶ Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 134.

¹³⁷ RIC II *Hadrian* 405-7, 415, 422a-c, 1029-33, 1039-43; BMC III *Hadrian* 911-3, 954a, 1871-8, 1896-9.

¹³⁸ Mattingly, *BMC III*, cl.

¹³⁹ **Figure 46**; Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafel 11, Nr. 9; Boatwright, "Just Window Dressing," pp. 67-68.

¹⁴⁰ **Figure 45**; Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, p. 113.

¹⁴¹ Kleiner & Matheson, *I Claudia*, p. 70.

shows her diademed, with her hair arranged in a similar style to the goddess statues and *Salus Augusta* representations of Livia: the hair is waved and centrally parted, drawn back into a bun.¹⁴² This statue type was probably commissioned to celebrate Sabina's new status as Augusta, since it is so reminiscent of early Augustae; indeed, it is possible that it dates from after Sabina's death and deification, which would explain the popularity of this portrait type and the goddess elements.¹⁴³ A veil is often a key feature of this portrait type. Other portraits of Sabina, however, suggest a returning fashion for simplified imperial feminine presentation, a mode that was to become more pronounced under the Antonines. One example of this is the "youthful" coin type of Sabina (all her living coin portraits were released between 128-136 CE, when she was in her forties, but only a few show her as a mature figure, the majority of her portraits being youthful), which depicts her portrait bust with the plainest hairstyle seen on an imperial woman for generations: a flat mass of hair with a small rise of hair over the forehead subtly evoking the Trajanic crest of curls or false diadem (or, less convincingly, a Livian *nodus*) which is kept in place by a thin circlet.¹⁴⁴ This "peasant" hairstyle is a feature of Sabina's portrait representations as well as coin-types. The style is noticeably similar to the hairstyles worn by Agrippina Major and Agrippina Minor during the Julio-Claudian era, although Sabina's thin circlet is a feature specific to her; the back of a statue depicting this hairstyle shows that the "circlet" is tied in a knot at the back of Sabina's scalp, suggesting that it is a tied ribbon or cord.¹⁴⁵ This represents a rejection of ornamentation and elaborate hairstyles, in favour of an overwhelmingly modest and non-aristocratic simplicity, and marks out the Hadrianic reign as one where aesthetic

¹⁴² **Figure 47.**

¹⁴³ Kleiner & Matheson, *I Claudia*, p. 70.

¹⁴⁴ *RIC II Hadrian* 394.

¹⁴⁵ Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafel 11, Nr 9.

feminine modesty in public art was more stringently preferred than during the Flavian and Trajanic reigns, as during the earlier Augustan period.

Sabina and Julia Domna are both represented as patrons of married women in an inscription which records a dedication (or donation) by Julia Domna on behalf of the *matronae* of the city of Rome, following a similar gesture by Sabina many generations earlier:

IVLIA AUG MATER AUGG ET CASTRORVM
MATRONIS RESTITVIT

SABINA AVG

MATRONIS¹⁴⁶

Julia Augusta, Mother of the Augusti and the Camp, restored this for the matrons.

Sabina Augusta [established this] for the matrons.

Julia Domna's addition to the inscription is yet another example of Roman imperial women using the past deeds and reputations of their predecessors to bolster their own public image, but this inscription is also important because it presents the imperial wife (and the Augusta) as a leading figure among the *matronae*. This inscription has even been taken as supporting evidence that there was an assembly of married women in Rome, established to oversee religious matters of significance to the *matronae*.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ CIL 6.997.

¹⁴⁷ Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," pp. 71-2.

The emphasis on feminine modesty that is a feature of all four Trajanic-Hadrianic Augustae has further added virtuous connotations to the title itself, and to some extent the expectations of future Augustae. Only two of these women were imperial wives, and yet all four were publicly celebrated as exemplars of domestic virtue. While literary praise for chaste and moral behaviour was a strong feature of Plotina's and Marciana's reputations, by the time that Sabina became Augusta we also see a return to the deliberately restrained physical appearance of the Augusta, in the manner of Livia's public image. The simplified hairstyles and statue garments that we identify with Sabina represent a move away from the ornate and complex styles of her Flavian and Trajanic predecessors, and a move towards a revived emphasis on visual as well as behavioural modesty and restraint, a fashion which was to continue with the Antonine Augustae.

Faustina Major was publicly represented as a patron of *concordia*; indeed, it became traditional for newlyweds to demonstrate their *concordia* by sacrificing in the presence of statues of Faustina Major and her imperial husband Antoninus Pius.¹⁴⁸ A common coin type acknowledging this ritual presents a mortal couple (who may be Faustina Minor and Marcus Aurelius, possibly at their betrothal ceremony) clasping hands in the presence of grand statues of Antoninus Pius and Faustina Major, beneath a *Concordia* legend.¹⁴⁹ The relationship between Faustina Major and her imperial husband is acknowledged in the literary sources as a loving and loyal union, although this may to some degree be ascribed to his evident grief over her death, and the strong emphasis he laid upon Faustina as a posthumous figure within his own public image, and the public image of the state. The foundation of *puellae*

¹⁴⁸ Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, p. 214.

¹⁴⁹ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 601. For further discussion on the importance of this ceremony and the goddess Concordia to the Antonines, see pages 216-218 of this thesis.

faustinianiae established in her honour, which provided dowries for poor and orphaned girls of Rome, continues the promotion of Faustina Major as a patron of marriage.¹⁵⁰ Faustina's physical depiction on coins and in statuary continues the revival in feminine simplicity and lack of ornament promoted by Sabina; the artificiality of hair design as demonstrated by Plotina, Marciana and Matidia has now given way to a softer, more natural style.¹⁵¹ After the death and consecration of Antoninus Pius, his divine public image was assimilated to that of Diva Faustina to the extent that their apotheoses were presented as simultaneous events in a public art programme set up by Marcus Aurelius, and the temple Antoninus had dedicated to Diva Faustina's worship was made to include the worship of Divus Antoninus in a neat reversal of the joint worship of Livia and Augustus.¹⁵² Faustina Major is closely associated with goddesses representing domestic and wifely virtues, including Vesta, Juno and Concordia.¹⁵³

According to the *Historia Augusta*, Faustina Minor was an immoral woman who had many affairs with gladiators and other seedy characters, although the stories seem designed to explain the paradoxical character of her son Commodus rather than to sabotage her character.¹⁵⁴ Looking beyond the scandal-mongering of literary sources, we can see that as with the relationship between Antoninus and Faustina Major, the relationship between Marcus Aurelius and Faustina Minor was one which was publicly commemorated as an example of marital concord, the two often being depicted together in statuary.¹⁵⁵ As in the case of Sabina, Faustina Minor was known

¹⁵⁰ *Hist. Aug. Antoninus Pius* 8.1; *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 397-399a.

¹⁵¹ Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafels 16-23, Nrs. 13-18.

¹⁵² **Figure 49**; Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, p. 87.

¹⁵³ See pages 187 (Vesta), 210 (Juno), 216-218 (Concordia) of this thesis

¹⁵⁴ *Hist. Aug. Marcus Antoninus* 18.

¹⁵⁵ Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, p. 77.

to travel with her husband rather than remaining at home, and her support of his military campaigns led to her receiving the title *Mater Castrorum*.¹⁵⁶ The practice of brides and bridegrooms sacrificing before silver statues of the emperor and his wife was continued during this reign, but only after Faustina Minor's death, so that she can be seen to posthumously take her mother's place as a sacred female patron of marriage.¹⁵⁷ Also after her death, Faustina was associated with a new order of the *puellae faustinianae* foundation, again replacing her mother as a patron of brides.¹⁵⁸ According to Dio, Septimius Severus claimed that his own marriage to Julia Domna had been blessed by a vision of Faustina Minor, who prepared the *thalamos* for them in the temple of Venus; presumably the same temple of Venus where married couples came to make offerings in the presence of the statues of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina.¹⁵⁹ While this story was obviously intended to support Septimius' and Julia's reign by implying that the last popular imperial couple had blessed their union, it has the added effect of emphasising Faustina Minor's public reputation as a good wife who was thought of as a patron of marriage, even if only in superstitious tales. Faustina's consecration as a *diva*, which must have occurred well before the time that the story of Septimius' dream was circulated, would have added a certain sanctity to this role as a patron of brides. Faustina Minor is also associated with goddesses who represent wifely and womanly virtues, particularly Juno and Concordia.¹⁶⁰

As Augustus had before him, Marcus Aurelius used the women of his family to publicly demonstrate his rejection of opulence and conspicuous consumption. When

¹⁵⁶ *RIC II M. Aurelius* 742, 748-749, 751-753, 1700, 1709, 1711-1712.

¹⁵⁷ Dio 72.31.1; Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, p. 214.

¹⁵⁸ *Hist. Aug. Marc. Antoninus* 26.5-26.9.

¹⁵⁹ Dio 75.3.1.

¹⁶⁰ See pages 210-211 (Juno), 216-218 (Concordia) of this thesis.

Marcus Aurelius held a public sale of imperial furnishings and luxuries to raise money for the Marcomannic war, among the list of rich objects such as goblets of gold and crystal (even vessels made for kings) and jewels from a sacred casket belonging to Hadrian were his wife Faustina Minor's silken and gold-ornamented garments.¹⁶¹ That she possessed such garments shows that Roman society had certainly changed since the days of Livia, when even a statue of a living woman should not be seen to wear earrings that were too extravagant, but the statement that Faustina's wealthy garments were sold to support her husband's war is quite telling. Whether or not she chose to do so, Faustina is being seen to support the patriotic efforts of Rome's army by sacrificing her luxurious robes. Also, as with her mother, Faustina Minor's portraiture continues to promote a rejection of opulence in favour of simplicity and restraint. Her most common hairstyle on coins as well as statuary is a simple, loose bun without any curls or frivolous ornamentation, and she generally is seen only to wear modest, plain draped clothing.¹⁶²

Fittschen identifies nine separate portrait types for Faustina Minor, which track her progress from a very young woman to a matronly figure in her 40's.¹⁶³ As Smith notes, this large number of types has provided us with approximately 70 extant portraits identified as Faustina (as compared to approx. 80-100 of Livia and approx. 50 of Julia Domna).¹⁶⁴ Fittschen argues that most, if not all of these portrait types were created to mark the birth of Faustina's children, a theory that has widespread acceptance among other scholarship of imperial women and Roman portraiture.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ *Hist. Aug. Marc. Antoninus* 17.4-17.5.

¹⁶² **Figure 51, Figure 52.**

¹⁶³ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, pp. 34-43, pp. 44-65, plates 1-43.

¹⁶⁴ Smith, R.R.R., "Roman Portraits," p. 228.

¹⁶⁵ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, p. 23; Fittschen, "Courtly Portraits," p. 44; Kleiner, "Family Ties," p.51.

However, it is worth noting here that the simplified, “Greek goddess” hairstyles that most generally characterise Faustina Minor’s public image had a great deal of influence on the portraiture of not only the younger women of her own dynasty, but also of the Severan dynasty that followed.¹⁶⁶ The soft, unornamented hairstyles favoured by Faustina were certainly a stark contrast to the elaborate coiffures of the Flavian and early Adoptive dynasties, but were by no means unprecedented among the Augustae – indeed, it is hard to imagine that the new simplicity that Faustina brought to imperial female fashions were not at least partly influenced by the public image of Livia. Not all of Faustina’s hairstyles were completely free of artifice, however: her most common portrait type, that associated with the birth of her two sons, features a complex arrangement of braids at the back, and a soft, layered fringe like overlapping petals of a flower.¹⁶⁷ The overall effect is certainly gentle and goddess-like, but there can be no doubt that a great amount of effort went into the hairstyle’s construction. As Faustina Minor aged, however, the complexities of her hairstyles lessened, with her later portrait types featuring soft, peasant-simple buns such as those later emulated by Julia Domna.¹⁶⁸

Lucilla’s portraiture continues the fashion of simplicity and lack of ornamentation displayed by her mother and grandmother.¹⁶⁹ The similarities between Lucilla and her mother are particularly noticeable on the coinage, with Lucilla wearing the same simple bun of hair and centre parting, with modest draperies.¹⁷⁰ The Berlin statue of

¹⁶⁶ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, pp. 69-88; Fittschen, “Courtly Portraits,” p. 44.

¹⁶⁷ **Figure 51**; Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, pp. 55-59.

¹⁶⁸ **Figure 52.**

¹⁶⁹ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, pp. 69-81.

¹⁷⁰ **Figure 54.**

Lucilla shows her with a heavy veil covering her usual hairstyle.¹⁷¹ Her eyes are heavily lidded, giving the impression that she is casting her eyes down in modesty. Lucilla's marriage to her father's co-emperor Lucius Verus is rarely mentioned in the literary sources, which give us little information about her representation as an imperial wife. This is not the case for the second marriage arranged for her after Lucius Verus' death. Both Lucilla and her mother protested the new marriage that was being arranged for her, to a husband both considered to be beneath Lucilla's dignity.¹⁷² Herodian tells us, however, that Lucilla's husband Pompeianus was a strong supporter of Commodus; by attempting to assassinate her brother, therefore, Lucilla was not only committing familial impiety, but was also disrespecting her husband.

The goddesses representing wifely virtue who are most closely associated with Lucilla are the same as those associated with her mother Faustina Minor: Juno and Concordia.¹⁷³ When examining the similarities between the elements of Faustina and Lucilla's public images, it should be noted that the majority of Lucilla's public representation occurred during her father's reign, and thus would have been intended to support his personal propaganda, just as Faustina Minor's public image had supported the personal propaganda of her father Antoninus before her husband became *princeps*. Marcus Aurelius' interest in representing a restrained, modest imperial family extended by necessity to the public representation of his daughter.

Crispina's public image during her role as imperial wife revolved closely around that of her husband, whose name often appeared on her coin legends, and yet there is

¹⁷¹ **Figure 53.**

¹⁷² *Hist. Aug. Marcus Antoninus* 20.6-20.7.

¹⁷³ See pages 211 (Juno), 217 (Concordia) of this thesis.

little evidence that Commodus was interested in promoting his imperial marriage in the same symbolic manner that his father and grandfather had used so effectively in their propaganda.¹⁷⁴ Crispina's eventual exile and execution for adultery makes it clear that marital concord was not a strong aspect of this particular imperial marriage in actuality, and yet the representation of her throughout her public life as the wife of Commodus follows the same patterns as her predecessors. In the extant portraits we have, Crispina's general style reflects the modesty and restraint that can be seen in the public image of the other Augustae of her husband's family, particularly in her representation on coin portraits.¹⁷⁵ She has *Pudicitia* and *Concordia* reverse types among her personal coinage, which shows that these virtues were still considered important in the public image of the imperial wife, and also that her public image was continuing the tradition of portraiture of Antonine women.¹⁷⁶ On at least one coin from the reign of Commodus, however, Crispina can be seen wearing a beaded or jewelled necklace.¹⁷⁷ Such obvious adornment was extremely rare with the Augustae in all portrait media, but especially on the state coinage. This example suggests that the restraint and modesty that was characteristic of the representation of the Augustae during the last few reigns was becoming less significant. The depiction of women throughout the Severan dynasty that was to follow confirms that while the reputations of sexual modesty and wifely virtue continued to be important to the public image of imperial women, jewels and fine clothing were quite commonly incorporated into that public image without any suggestion of immodesty or immorality. There is no obvious reason why such a change should have occurred, unless it was that the growing stability of the empire meant that there was less of a

¹⁷⁴ *RIC III Commodus* 276-290, 665-686.

¹⁷⁵ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, pp. 82-88.

¹⁷⁶ *RIC III Commodus* 278, 285, 665, 670, 675; *BMC IV Commodus* 29, 36-38, 43, 406-410, 419, 427.

¹⁷⁷ **Figure 55.**

culture of fear about the dangers of foreign and decadent women, and thus the women of the imperial family had less reason to prove their Roman restraint.

The public representation of Augustae during the Antonine dynasty built upon the supposed relationship between the physical appearance of modesty and restraint, and the reputation for behaving in a chaste and modest manner, as had been earlier established with Sabina. Indeed, the appearance of restraint on behalf of the imperial women took on a particular importance during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. A strong emphasis on marital concord between the imperial couples was established during the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, both themselves and their wives not only appearing to exemplify the ideals of marriage, but also representing marriage in a sacred and symbolic sense, as patrons who could bestow luck and good marital fortune upon newlyweds. The reign of Commodus, however, itself characterised as a period when decadence and a lack of restraint returned to the imperial family of Rome, saw a change in the representation of the imperial family (and particularly the Augusta) as being overly restrained and modest in their sartorial tastes, while concepts such as the celebration of *pudicitia* continued to be important. This can be seen as a foreshadowing of the new attitude towards the public representation of women that would take hold under the Severans.

That Manlia Scantilla and Didia Clara were intended to fulfil an important role in the propaganda of Didius Julianus (respectively their husband and father) is evident from the haste with which he made them both Augustae and released coins in their honour; unfortunately the small body of evidence means there is little information as to the significance of *pudicitia* and other domestic or wifely virtues with either of these

women. From Manlia Scantilla's meagre body of coins, however, we see a numismatic association with Juno Regina, the "queenly" aspect of this goddess who was particularly associated with the imperial wife.¹⁷⁸ Any association with Juno necessarily implies the importance of marriage, as Juno was a patron of wives, but in this case it is a very slender piece of evidence. Didia Clara was married to a Cornelius Repentinus, whom Julianus made prefect of the city, but there is no indication in the available sources that the son-in-law was being groomed for a higher imperial position, and certainly no reference to Didia Clara's wifely qualities one way or another.¹⁷⁹ Physically, both Manlia Scantilla and her daughter are represented on the coins in similar compositions to the Antonine women, with similar hairstyles and the same lack of ostentatious detail.¹⁸⁰

Under Septimius Severus, the imperial family as a whole took on a new prominence in relation to the public image of the emperor, and this was reflected through coin issues and public monuments as well as private portraiture. Julia Domna is regularly depicted at her husband's side, with as well as without their sons.¹⁸¹ In addition to appearing alongside her husband on coins celebrating *Concordia Aeterna*, Julia Domna's image appears several times on the Severan arch at Leptis Magna, her presence among the images of military and political triumph always symbolising the importance of family and *concordia*.¹⁸² Her role as a virtuous *matrona* and woman is further supported through her coin issues, particularly those commemorating Vesta

¹⁷⁸ *RIC IV Didius Julianus* 7a-7b, 18a-19b; *BMC V Didius Julianus* 10-12, 32-37. For a discussion on the importance of Juno Regina to the public image of the imperial wives, and the distinct usages of Juno Regina as compared to Juno Lucina in the public images of the Augustae, see pages 206-213 of this thesis.

¹⁷⁹ *Hist. Aug. Didius Julianus* 3.6.

¹⁸⁰ **Figure 56, Figure 57.**

¹⁸¹ **Figure 58, Figure 59:** Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," p. 61.

¹⁸² E.g. **Figure 63;** *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 275.

and Concordia.¹⁸³ Lusnia identifies twenty-five reverse types associated with or depicting Julia Domna between 193 and 217, and divides these into three chronological periods by the titles used: first Julia Domna Aug., then Julia Augusta, and finally Julia Pia Felix Aug.¹⁸⁴

In public, particularly at religious festivals such as the Secular Games, and through her association with the restoration of temples such as the Aedes Vestae and the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris, which were associated with *pudicitia* and female worship, Julia Domna represented the quintessential Roman *matrona*, as is to be expected from the imperial wife.¹⁸⁵ In the case of the inscription of the matrons which commemorated Sabina Augusta, but had a second inscription added now to honour Julia Domna, she can even be seen to be taking over the role of a leading representative of *matronae* in the city of Rome.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, the importance of Julia Domna's matronal image is further confirmed by her appearance at the Saecular Games, during which she took her place among the married women of Rome to make offerings to Juno and Diana.¹⁸⁷ As with Livia and Plotina, we must assume that it was important that the imperial wife be seen to participate in the sacred responsibilities of the *matronae*, but we might also infer that the imperial wife's (or Augusta's) prominence meant that she had a particular responsibility to lead by example, and that her participation in such activities implies a certain leadership among the women.

¹⁸³ See pages 188-189 (Vesta), 212 (Juno), 218 (Concordia).

¹⁸⁴ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," pp. 120-121.

¹⁸⁵ Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," pp. 65-72.

¹⁸⁶ *CIL* 6.997; see page 117 of this thesis.

¹⁸⁷ Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," p. 63. Epigraphic evidence provided by Scheid, "The Religious Roles of Roman Women," pp. 394-395.

The *caduceus* (“herald’s staff”) which is an important attribute of Julia Domna’s public image as *Mater Castrorum* upon the state coinage and the relief sculpture on the Porta Argentariorum, is not only a symbol of peace-making but also of the unity of opposites.¹⁸⁸ Macrobius refers to the snakes as being male and female intertwined and suggests that the *caduceus* itself stands as a symbol for marital concord as well as the unity of the disparate concepts of motherhood and the military suggested by the *Mater Castrorum* title.¹⁸⁹ Either as a member of the imperial family or alone, Julia Domna is often used to symbolise concepts like family and *concordia*, such as when her image appears several times on the Severan arch at Leptis Magna, a soothing maternal presence among the images of military and political triumph.¹⁹⁰ Septimius emulated Augustus by reviving and strictly enforcing the moral legislation of the early empire, and also by using his own family as an example of what such legislation was intended to preserve; as his wife, Julia Domna was a vital figure in this campaign, and was regularly presented as a symbol of traditional wifely virtues.¹⁹¹ The public emphasis on her role as *Mater Castrorum* is clearly intended to support the presentation of Julia Domna as the successor to Faustina Minor, just as her husband is presented as the successor to Marcus Aurelius.¹⁹²

The association between moral behaviour and restrained appearance, however, was far less important under the Severans (or, alternatively, the definition of modest/immodest appearance was changing). While Septimius Severus belied his African origins by being regularly portrayed togate as a traditional Roman citizen, Julia Domna’s public representation was far more ornate, though she was still clearly

¹⁸⁸ **Figure 59**; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 175.

¹⁸⁹ Macrobius *Sat.* 1.19.16-1.19.17.

¹⁹⁰ **Figure 63**; Kampen, “Between Public and Private,” p. 242.

¹⁹¹ Gorrie, “Julia Domna’s Building Patronage,” p. 62, p. 72.

¹⁹² Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 346-347.

being influenced by previous imperial women of Rome, and her portraiture on coins in particular evoked the style of the Antonine and Didian Augustae. Her appearance in other artistic media is less restrained; on a painted portrait from Egypt, for instance, she is seen wearing pearls at her ears and throat as well as being crowned with a pearl-studded diadem.¹⁹³ This new fashion for ornamentation on the portraits of the Augustae (first suggested by one of Crispina's coin portraits) represents a strong departure from the traditional portrait fashions of the Augustae. This is not necessarily because Julia Domna was excessively "foreign" in her ways. Lack of the characteristic "modesty" of the Augusta can also be read into the elaborate hairstyles of the Flavian and Trajanic women, so it is not acceptable to dismiss Julia Domna's imagery as merely "foreign" or "anti-Roman".

Bartman argues against previous theories that Julia Domna's wigs were intended to reflect her exotic eastern origins, suggesting instead that the artificial hair was used to make Julia Domna appear more Roman and less foreign; indeed, that the style of coiffeur chosen was specifically intended to emphasise a similarity between Julia Domna and her predecessor, Faustina Minor.¹⁹⁴ Baharal also presents the case for deliberate similarities between the iconography and physical style of Faustina Minor and Julia Domna's portraiture.¹⁹⁵ Lusnia disagrees with the physical similarity, but suggests that deliberate associations were made between the two women in other ways, particularly through the goddesses associated with Julia Domna on her many coin types, and the titles presented to Julia Domna.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ **Figure 58.**

¹⁹⁴ Bartman, "Hair and the Artifice," p. 17.

¹⁹⁵ Baharal, "The Portraits of Julia Domna," pp. 110-118.

¹⁹⁶ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," pp. 122-124.

The use of jewellery and other ornamentation in some portraiture does suggest that Eastern fashions were no longer as problematic to the imperial family as they may have been in the past. More tellingly, it suggests that while modesty and wifely virtue were still essential to the reputation of the Augustae, it was no longer as important to portray that modesty and wifely virtue through a specific code of portrait fashion. The cosmopolitan attitude of Septimius Severus, who was not raised inside Roman culture, undoubtedly had much to do with this change, but it also reflects a greater change within Rome itself, on the cusp of its transition into Byzantine style. It is important to note, however, that very few of Julia Domna's portraits do in fact depict her as wearing jewellery of any kind; her appearance on the majority of her statue and numismatic portraits is not noticeably more ornamented than that of the Antonine women.

The ornate style of dress favoured by Julia Domna is symptomatic of a changing, eastern-inspired fashion that foreshadows the Byzantine style which would soon come to represent what was "Roman." The scholarly reaction to the depiction of Julia upon the Porta Argentariorum is an example of the modern over-emphasis of her foreignness: Grant refers to her open-palmed pose as "an oriental gesture of adulation."¹⁹⁷ This is a very specific interpretation for a pose that could just as easily be read as a standard gesture of greeting. Likewise, Julia Domna's diadem has been interpreted as a Syrian symbol of devotion to Luna implying the emperor as Sol Invictus, but such an interpretation ignores the precedent set by Plotina, Sabina and Agrippina Minor, who each wore a diadem as part of their public image.¹⁹⁸ While some elements of the public representation of Julia Domna are noticeably more

¹⁹⁷ **Figure 59;** Grant, *The Severans*, p. 46.

¹⁹⁸ Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, p. 282.

exotic than that of her forebears, modern scholars display a tendency to read exotic influences into even her more mundane representations. On a caption accompanying an image of a Julia Domna aureus, Giacosa comments on her hair being arranged “according to the complicated style of the period,” without acknowledging that the style (waved hair over the scalp with a wide bun at the back) is almost identical to that worn by Manlia Scantilla and Didia Clara upon the coinage, if carved with a little more dexterity, and that the style is far less complicated than many worn by previous imperial women such as Plotina or Faustina Major.¹⁹⁹ Historians for the most part look at Julia Domna with an expectation of oriental ostentation, even when she is clearly wearing fashions established by prior Augustae whose “Romanness” is not in question.

Women’s fashions changed slowly in imperial Rome, particularly in the case of the Augustae and other women of the imperial family, but they did change. Just as Sabina’s public portraiture marked a return to deliberate simplicity and modesty far beyond that which might be expected for an aristocratic woman in her public position, Julia Domna’s public portraiture represents another movement away from such simplicity. Given the propensity of previous Augustae to be depicted with diadems and other elements of religious iconography in public portraiture, it seems deliberately obtuse to accuse Julia Domna of being particularly non-Roman or immodest in her portraiture for wearing jewellery in a few of her less public portraits. The importance of the Augusta’s role as a “good wife” remained just as significant to her public image.

¹⁹⁹ Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, caption to Plate XXXIX; for image see **Figure 61**.

According to Dio, the relationship between Caracalla and Plautilla was unhappy because Caracalla was disgusted with his wife, who was a “shameless creature.”²⁰⁰ As with many imperial women who are painted as “bad wives” in the literary sources, this reputation did not affect the public representation of Plautilla during her public life. As Caracalla’s wife, Plautilla was strongly associated with Concordia in various aspects on the reverse types of her coinage. She is regularly presented on these coins alongside her husband, in the traditional pose representing marital harmony.²⁰¹ In terms of chastity, one anecdote about Plautilla alleges that before her marriage, her father Plautianus had more than a hundred Roman citizens castrated, many of them adult and married men, in order that his daughter only be tutored and attended by eunuchs.²⁰² It is not made clear whether this particular anecdote supports or challenges Plautilla’s tendency towards chastity before her marriage to Caracalla; it can certainly be read either way.

Bartman describes Plautilla’s portrait images as a rejection of the “blatant artifice” of Julia Domna’s personal style, noting her “long, silky locks” and “seemingly more natural coiffure.”²⁰³ The phrase “seemingly more natural” is deliberate, as Bartman goes on to describe how Plautilla’s hairstyle – itself representative of a generally popular hairstyle of the time – may also have been created by strategic use of a hairpiece, albeit one which is subtler in appearance than the substantial wigs of Julia Domna.²⁰⁴ It was rare for an imperial daughter-in-law to be publicly represented in such a noticeably different style from that of the women of her husband’s family, and this may represent a further example of the fact that the imperial family of the

²⁰⁰ Dio 76.3.1.

²⁰¹ See page 219.

²⁰² Dio 76.14.5.

²⁰³ Bartman, “Hair and the Artifice,” p. 17.

²⁰⁴ **Figure 64, Figure 65;** Bartman, “Hair and the Artifice,” p. 17.

Severans was breaking away from some (though by no means all) of the traditions of the past. As Caracalla's wife, Plautilla was often included in inscriptions honouring the whole Severan family, although Caracalla later had her name removed from many of these inscriptions, as he did with the name of his brother Geta, and many of her portraits were destroyed, particularly those on public monuments.²⁰⁵ Plautilla's representation on the state coinage includes a mixture of coins in her own right, and appearances on the reverse types of coins celebrating her husband, in a manner that was by now standard for an imperial wife.²⁰⁶ The fact that she was included in the public art surrounding the imperial family before the death of her father-in-law is notable, and shows that despite Caracalla's subordinate position to his father as "co-emperor," his wife was presented as a true imperial wife and not just the wife of the heir.

Kleiner notes that while Julia Domna's hairstyle inspired the imperial women who succeeded her in the third century, the idealisation of features that characterised her public image was largely discarded by her successors in favour of more realistic, matronly representations, just as "Republican" realism was returning to fashion for the sculptural portraits of men.²⁰⁷ Julia Maesa, whose prominence came late in life, is portrayed on coins as an elderly woman, and her portraits do not display the same kind of grandiose ostentation as did those of her sister, though she does sometimes wear the diadem that has come to be associated with the Augusta; Maesa's daughter Julia Soaemias is similarly represented on the coinage as a modest figure with a strong physical resemblance to her mother, and sometimes also wears the diadem.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ *CIL* 6.1. 220, 226-227, 354. For erased examples: 120, 180.

²⁰⁶ *RIC IV Caracalla* 66-67, 349, 359-373, 578-582.

²⁰⁷ Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, p. 378.

²⁰⁸ **Figure 66, Figure 67**; *RIC IV Elagabalus* 236-237, 249.

Julia Maesa has at least one reverse type on her coinage devoted to Pudicitia.²⁰⁹

Grant points out the irony of this, considering that Julia Maesa's grandsons' alternating claims to the empire were entirely based on the premise that they were conceived during adulterous affairs between Julia Maesa's daughters and her nephew Caracalla.²¹⁰ Julia Soaemias, mother of Elagabalus (one of those heirs supposedly conceived through adultery) is also associated with personifications of Pudicitia on her coin reverses.²¹¹ Likewise, Julia Mamaea, mother of Alexander (also an heir supposedly conceived through adultery) was associated with both Vesta and Pudicitia on her coinage.²¹² While there has always been a strong contrast between the negative images of various imperial women in the literary sources, and the public image represented by public statuary, numismatic portraits and epigraphy, this association between the Severan Julias and Pudicitia is an extreme example of this tendency. At this time, it appears that an association with the divine figure of Pudicitia does not require even the public pretence of modest or chaste behaviour. This may be taken as supporting evidence that connections to previous Augustae were just as important to an Augusta's public image as the promotion of appropriate virtues to their reputation. Julia Maesa and Julia Soaemias' connection to Pudicitia on the coins reflects the whole history of women who were Augustae, even though in their cases it could lead to ridicule; the Augusta was to be presented as chaste, modest and an embodiment of marital virtue even if the woman who held that title was known (or publicly reputed) to be lacking in such feminine virtues.

²⁰⁹ *RIC IV Elagabalus* 268.

²¹⁰ Grant, *The Severans*, p. 47.

²¹¹ *PIR² Iulia Soaemias Bassiana Augusta* 704.

²¹² See page 189 of this thesis.

All three of the wives of Elagabalus are numismatically associated with Concordia, which may have been a deliberate propaganda choice or simply a case of re-using the same reverse types for the sake of simplicity.²¹³ However, the continual reference to Pudicitia throughout the numismatic history of the Augustae suggests that there was more to this choice than merely recycling old coin blanks. Regardless of the reputation or importance of the imperial wife or Augusta, it is significant that the various emperors chose this particular virtue as one that was significant to the public image of the women of their family: and, potentially, the mothers of their sons. Julia Paula also has extant coin reverses devoted to *Pudicitia* and *Pudicitia Augusta*.²¹⁴ Severus Alexander's wife Orbiana also has a *Pudicitia* reverse type.²¹⁵ The importance of this figure (and the associated virtues) to the imperial wives was thus still being maintained, even though the imperial wife can be seen to be marginalised at this time in favour of the more prominent imperial mothers and grandmother: the senior Augustae.

At the close of the Severan dynasty, then, *pudicitia* is still firmly entrenched as an essential virtue to be associated with the Augustae even at a time when the succession itself has been determined by supposed acts of *stuprum*. The significance of the Augusta as a figure who embodied all the ideals of *pudicitia* had continued solidly since the days of Livia, and the importance of the Augusta as a chaste and modest wife has remained constant as a theme integral to the public image of the women of the imperial family. We can see this as a necessary ideal because of the close relationship of the Augustae to the succession, and the importance of the fact

²¹³ *RIC IV Elagabalus* 210-216, 225-228, 232-233, 386-387, 389-395, 399; *BMC V Elagabalus* 171-176, 184-187, 316-322, 335-337.

²¹⁴ *RIC IV Elagabalus* 217, 220-221b.

²¹⁵ *RIC IV Alexander Severus* 324.

that any potential heir to the principate must be seen to have come from a worthy mother as well as father. By assuring the public that the most prominent women of the imperial family embodied domestic, modest and traditional virtues, the princeps was not only able to represent these women as appropriate vessels through which to produce a *princeps*, but had the benefit of their virtues reflecting upon him. Having women in his family who appeared to be the ideal Roman matrons made the princeps himself look like a successful paterfamilias, and gave him the opportunity to present positive female role models to the populace.

Given the prominence of the Augustae as the feminine representatives of the imperial family, it is also worth considering whether their feminine virtues and achievements - - successful fertility and maternity as well as *pudicitia* and modesty - were believed to affect to Rome's military success and public safety. If the chastity of the Vestal Virgins was intended to preserve not only the fertility but also the safety of the city of Rome, it is just as credible that the behaviour of the Augustae was also intended to serve a symbolic purpose. The Augustae are held up as exemplars of the kind of feminine and domestic virtues that the emperors wished all women to aspire to, just like the Vestals. This public focus on their domestic and wifely virtues places them in a position to symbolise societal domesticity as a whole. It was Augustus who first brought the hearth of the Vestals, representing all the hearths of the city, into his own home, thus declaring that the hearth of his own home had become the symbolic hearth of Rome. This may be another reason why it was important for the Augustae to demonstrate an appearance of and association with both *pudicitia* the virtue and Pudicitia the goddess, and for imperial marriages to be seen as embodying concord and pleasing Concordia, even as the official conception of appropriate levels of

modesty and virtue changed from dynasty to dynasty.

Chapter Three: Dynastic Fertility and the Maternal Augusta

While industry in the household was as essential a function for the Roman wife as sexual morality and chaste behaviour, the most significant domestic achievement she could reach was to become a Roman mother. The mother of a Roman family had the important function of passing the ideals of traditional values and culture on to her children, both through their education and by her own example.¹ Becoming a mother was the most significant act by which a woman could increase her status in ancient Rome, and this is particularly the case within the imperial family, where motherhood took on a political as well as an ideological significance. The status and reputation of the mother reflected strongly on to her children, as is evident from the literary portraits of mothers of famous sons such as Cornelia Mother of the Gracchi, Aurelia and Atia.² In light of this, the significance of the mother figure to the imperial succession, and the promotion of heirs within the imperial family, deserves a more comprehensive examination than it has previously received. Dixon found that the relevance of the mother to the status of her children did not diminish as they left early childhood; the respect given to Republican mothers such as Cornelia, Atia and Arria supports this theory, and the relationship between imperial mothers and their children throughout the first three hundred years of empire goes a long way towards promoting this concept thoroughly.³ The title Augusta has maternal connotations and considerations that conveyed a certain level of status and honour, not just to the woman who held it, but also to her children. To be Augusta was to be a potential

¹ Rawson, *The Family in Ancient Rome*, p. 40; Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, pp. 6-11; Dixon, "Exemplary Housewife," pp. 56-57, p. 70.

² Plutarch, *Gai. Gracch.* 4.3, 19.1-19.3; Tac. *Dialogue* 28.

³ Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, pp. 176-177.

mother of emperors and imperial heirs, and the public image and status of an Augusta had a powerful effect on the public image and status of her children, particularly her sons.

While *pudicitia* and other wifely virtues were undoubtedly important to the public image of the women who were named Augusta, as they were to all women of the imperial family, it is the essential wifely duties of fertility and maternity that are of greater significance. Of the first six women who were titled Augusta, five were mothers and the sixth, Claudia Augusta, received the title upon the occasion of her own birth. Of the first twenty-eight women who were titled Augusta, from Livia to Orbiana, seventeen were (or had been) mothers at the time they received the name. Of these, Livia, Antonia, Sextilia, Domitilla, Julia Domna, Julia Maesa, Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea were mothers or grandmothers of current emperors or imperial heirs at the time of becoming Augusta.⁴ Agrippina received the title either shortly before or upon the occasion of her son being adopted as the imperial heir. Poppaea and Faustina Minor both received the name upon the birth of their first daughter, with Faustina going on to produce a son who would inherit the empire from her husband. Marciana, Matidia, Faustina Major, Lucilla and Manlia Scantilla's children would almost certainly have been considered as heirs had they been male; as it was, many of their daughters and granddaughters were included in dynastic marriages that were intended to produce heirs. Likewise, had Domitia's son lived to see his father's accession as emperor, he would have been Domitian's heir. Those Augustae who were not (to the best of our knowledge) mothers at the time of receiving the title: Claudia, Julia Titi, Crispina, Didia Clara, Plautilla, Julia Paula,

⁴ As previously discussed, Diva Domitilla Augusta may have been the sister, rather than the mother of Titus. The sister of Titus, however, had also borne children at the time of her death.

Aquilia Severa, Annia Faustina and Orbiana, would all have been potential mothers of future imperial heirs, being either imperial wives or daughters and of child-bearing age at the time they received the title. Even Plotina and Sabina, women who were too old to bear children at the time they were named Augusta, still had a strong maternal aspect to their public image through their inclusion in the adoptions of their husband's heirs. Looking outside the actual Augustae to include two women who were offered the title by the senate but refused it by their husbands, both Messalina and Flavia Titiana were mothers of sons who would at the time have been expected to inherit the empire from their fathers. Indeed, in the case of Messalina, the offer came immediately upon the birth of her son, while Flavia Titiana's son had been refused the title Caesar only because his father was waiting for him to earn it.⁵

It is clear from the evidence that maternity, fertility and dynasty were not the only functions of the title Augusta; there was certainly no overt or stated connection between the necessary function of any imperial woman to contribute to the imperial dynasty, and the bestowal of the title Augusta upon her. The haphazard development of the usage of the title, not only in the Julio-Claudian dynasty, but across all the dynasties which utilised Augusta, makes it impossible to make any concrete statements about the imperial intentions behind the title at any given time, let alone for the three hundred year span covered in this thesis. However, the regular use of the title to support dynastic claims, to reward imperial fertility, and the juxtaposition between the Augustae and public maternal imagery is far too overwhelming to ignore. It is clear by implication that the title Augusta was therefore intimately tied up (if not officially connected) with imperial fertility.

⁵ *Hist. Aug. Pertinax* 6.9; Dio 12.5.

Spaeth explores the role of Ceres Mater in the propaganda surrounding the imperial women, and notes that the rare titles *Mater Augusti* and *Mater Caesaris* were given to the most prominent women of imperial history: Livia, Agrippina Minor, Domitia Longina, Faustina Minor and Julia Domna.⁶ It may be more appropriate, of course, to note that the most prominent women of imperial history were those who were eligible to be Mater Augusti and Mater Caesaris. Spaeth suggests that the wife of the *princeps* (or, more importantly, the mother of his heirs) was intended to serve a role that was the feminine equivalent of *Pater Patriae*, symbolising their maternal role over the empire as a whole.⁷ While Livia was never officially awarded the title *Mater Patriae* as the senate had intended, Dio informs us that many of the people still referred to her as such, believing that she deserved the title for her role as *materfamilias* to the empire.⁸ The title was finally brought into use with Julia Domna, and continued in use throughout the Severan reign. Temporini examined the possibility that the title Augusta, in fact, was intended as a female equivalent to *Pater Patriae*, noting the juxtaposition between the presentation of both titles to the imperial wives and emperors during the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines.⁹

Livia had only borne two living children, sons of her first husband and not of Augustus, when she entered into public life. Nevertheless, the honorific status of “mother of three children” was granted to her upon the death of her beloved younger

⁶ Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 122.

⁷ Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 122.

⁸ Dio 58.2.3.

⁹ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, pp. 32-34.

son Drusus.¹⁰ A tradition of celebrating imperial women for honorary fertility began here, and was continued through many dynasties. Another form of honorary motherhood was the imperial consort's role as maternal figure for the whole household; just as her sister-in-law Octavia was famous for raising a houseful of children from various families, Livia as the wife of Augustus also reared the children of many and assisted with the dowries of others.¹¹ There is no doubt that Livia's maternal role was an integral part of her public image. The death of her son Drusus resulted in a public outpouring of support and sympathy for Livia, reflected by the various honours and commissions awarded to her at that time, including public statues and the *ius trium liberorum*.¹² Some smaller pieces displaying the maternal Livia are extant, including a bronze plaque (for armour decoration) of Livia with her two sons, and also the Marlborough turquoise which shows Livia and one of her sons in a composition that evokes the portrayal of Venus with Cupid.¹³ A title provided informally to Livia, through coins of the Eastern mints and an inscription from Hispania Baetica, was *genetrix orbis* ("ancestress of the world").¹⁴ In the *Consolatio ad Liviam*, she is referred to as *optima mater* ("the best of mothers").¹⁵ Both before and after she became Augusta, Livia's maternal role was emphasised by an association with maternal goddesses, particularly Ceres and Demeter; generally her association with Venus Genetrix was marginal and confined to private artworks, although we can see more emphasis of this goddess to her public image after she was adopted as a Julia.¹⁶

¹⁰ Dio 55.2.5.

¹¹ Dio 58.2-3.

¹² Dio 55.2.5.

¹³ **Figure 6;** Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, pp. 82-3.

¹⁴ Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 122.

¹⁵ *Cons. Liv.* 341.

¹⁶ See page 189 of this thesis.

After the death of Augustus, Livia's maternal role became a more powerful element not only of her public image, but also of the imperial succession. By posthumously adopting Livia into the Julian *gens* and awarding her a feminised version of his own imperial title, Augustus was cementing the position of her son as his heir. The name Augusta appears to have been invented in order to assist the transition between one Augustus and another by promoting the mother of the new emperor. As Barrett notes, it was by no means an automatic process for a man's heir to inherit a *cognomen* that had been presented to him by the senate; the fact that Drusus received the honorific ability to bestow the name Germanicus upon his descendants suggests that this was something out of the ordinary.¹⁷ For Tiberius to inherit the name Augustus, as well as the position it implied, required a great deal of public support and acceptance, and Livia was a key figure of support for the new *princeps*. Livia's role as imperial mother and Augusta in the new regime has sparked debate among scholars, particularly over the divide between her actual role during the reign of Tiberius, and Augustus' intentions as to the role she was to play; it becomes clear that whatever power Augustus may have intended Livia to wield as Julia Augusta, when he bestowed a third of the principate upon her as well as the new name and family position, Tiberius interpreted the title as being without political or constitutional significance.¹⁸ The senate itself remained convinced that Livia had a significant role to play in the state, and to that end voted that she be given the title *Mater Patriae*, another feminised version of an Augustan honorific title, but one which was perhaps more clearly defined than Augusta.¹⁹ A title generally restricted to Roman emperors (though Cicero and Julius Caesar also held it), *Pater Patriae* has much in common with Augusta in that it was not a title of "power" as were many

¹⁷ Suet. *Aug.* 101.2; Dio 56.32.1; Barrett, *Livia*, pp.151-152.

¹⁸ Suet, *Tib.* 51; Barrett, *Livia*, pp. 151-152.

¹⁹ Suet. *Tib.* 50.3; Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.1; Dio 57.12.4, 58.2.3.

other titles awarded to emperors, such as *Imperator*, *Princeps Senatus*, *Caesar* and *Augustus*, and it was a title that was generally offered by the senate to the emperor once his reign was established, rather than immediately upon his promotion. He could turn it down, as Nero did on account of his youth.²⁰ Indeed, *Augusta* can certainly be read as a closer equivalent to *Pater Patriae* than to any other male imperial title, despite the linguistic similarity to *Augustus*.

An alternative title suggested for Livia was *Parens Patriae*, an honour which, as well as *Pater Patriae*, was associated with Caesar himself on coins and inscriptions.²¹

Like *Augusta* (and to some extent, *Pater Patriae*), the title *Mater Patriae* would have been honorary in nature, rather than being considered a literal statement of power; in any case, this honour was disallowed by Tiberius, who also rejected *Pater Patriae* on his own behalf. The title of *Mater Patriae*, with the implications of an honorary maternal role over the entire state, was not established in the public image of the *Augusta* until Julia Domna, and the Severan *Augustae* who followed her.

Another honour that the senate proposed during Livia's lifetime was that the phrase "son of Julia" be added to Tiberius' official nomenclature.²² The implications of this are that Tiberius would gain a higher status through an official identification as the son of Livia than he held purely as the son of Augustus. This idea of a son gaining honour and status through his relationship to his mother was by no means a Roman tradition at this time; the Gracchi, for instance, may have gained reflected status from their mother Cornelia's good reputation, but she is referred to by her relationship to them, not *vice versa*. This proposal, along with another that the month of October be

²⁰ Suet. *Nero* 8.

²¹ Suet. *Div. Jul.* 76.1; Juv. *Sat.* 8.243-8.244; Barrett, *Livia*, pp. 156-157.

²² Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.1; Suet. *Tib.* 50.2; Dio 57.12.4.

renamed Livius and the month of September be renamed Tiberius, was firmly rejected by Tiberius; it is worth noting, however, that he turned down the honours on his own behalf, not just those proposed for his mother. As Barrett notes, if these proposed honours annoyed him it was more likely due to the obvious sycophancy of the senate rather than any insult he took from their proposal; most of these honours had only single precedents if any, and Tiberius was clearly not intending to follow Augustus' model in all things.²³ So much emphasis has been laid on Tiberius' refusal of certain honours to his mother that it is all but forgotten that these are not honours which Augustus ever intended her to hold; indeed, her public image during the reign of Tiberius was far more substantial than that she had held as imperial wife, because Augustus had been so anxious not to raise the women of his family too high into the public sphere. As Julia Augusta, mother of the emperor, Livia set precedents of feminine honour and public behaviour that went much further than Livia Drusilla had achieved, paving the way for future imperial mothers to be similarly honoured with a certain level of public status whether or not they had also been an imperial wife.

Despite the many honours that Tiberius rejected on behalf of his mother, he did make use of her as a figure of Roman femininity in the public art of Rome. Livia's portrait appeared far more substantially in statuary during this period as imperial mother, often on a colossal scale.²⁴ Her name appeared on many inscriptions along with that of Tiberius, demonstrating her importance to the emperor's own public image.²⁵ Most significant of all are the coins on which (it is believed) Livia's portrait appears

²³ Barrett, *Livia*, p. 158.

²⁴ Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 111.

²⁵ *CIL* 9.3304, 10.7340, 10.7489, 11.1165, 15.7814.

in the guise of Pietas, Iustitia and Salus Augusta.²⁶ This honour was certainly beyond that which Augustus had given Livia as imperial wife, and demonstrates that the first imperial mother was an important symbolic figure in Roman art and propaganda. While Tiberius refused Livia the status of a deity before and after her death, the coins he produced during his reign associated his mother with the role of goddess long before such a role was formally acknowledged in Rome. In the period between the death of Livia and her deification, many portraits (particularly those dedicated in the provinces) further evoke the idea of divinity, suggesting that the people wanted her to join Augustus as a god whether or not her consecration received official sanction. One prime example for this is a Livia statue from Velleia, probably commissioned during the reign of Caligula, in which she is presented wearing a crescent diadem, an accessory that had previously only been displayed on statues of goddesses.²⁷ Livia was occasionally presented with a diadem in earlier images, but only on provincially minted coins or “private” gem portraits.²⁸ It is the *Salus Augusta* hairstyle rather than the *nodus* which characterises the posthumous depictions of Livia, the simpler “goddess-style” being copied by later imperial women such as Caligula’s sisters Drusilla and Livilla.²⁹

The substantial public image of Livia as imperial mother provided a model for the public representation of future imperial mothers, and demonstrates that it was not only as mothers of potential future emperors that the image of maternity was important to the imperial family; the status of the mother could also serve to augment the status of her son throughout his reign as emperor.

²⁶ Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10.

²⁷ Wood, *Imperial Women*, pp. 125-127.

²⁸ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 126.

²⁹ Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, p. 140.

Antonia had no need for honorary fertility just as she had no need to be given honorary *univira* status; she was not only the wife of a single man during her lifetime, but she also bore the requisite three children: Germanicus, Livilla and Claudius. The first two were publicly favoured throughout their lives, paired into “dynastic” marriages with other members of the imperial family and intended to play an important role in the Julio-Claudian dynasty; the third child, Claudius, actually became emperor, despite not being similarly favoured throughout his early life. While Livia was set up as a public example of wifely virtue because she was the wife of the *princeps*, Antonia, like her mother Octavia before her, simply embodied that ideal, infusing the title of Augusta with connotations of *univira*, mother of three children and other elements of *pudicitia*. Antonia was heralded in inscriptions as the mother of Germanicus, Claudius and Livilla and was associated primarily with Venus/Aphrodite, the maternal goddess who had a particular significance to the imperial succession; this was relevant long before Claudius’ reign, as Antonia’s eldest son Germanicus was, before his early death, expected to succeed Tiberius.³⁰ Antonia appears on the Ara Pacis with her infant son Germanicus as well as her husband, a positioning which clearly denotes her dynastic role.³¹

During her lifetime, before she was publicly heralded as Augusta, Antonia’s maternal reputation was as a strict moralist as well as a critical and unsympathetic figure of authority: she reportedly took personal responsibility for executing her daughter Livilla after the Sejanus scandal, and often referred to her son Claudius as both a

³⁰ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 43.

³¹ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 12.

fool, and a monster of a man.³² While Antonia herself was never an imperial consort, being the mother of Germanicus and Claudius as well grandmother to Caligula and Agrippina Minor ensured that she was remembered as one of the most vital maternal figures of the dynasty. Antonia was first given (or at least offered) the title Augusta by Caligula. This suggests that as the imperial grandmother she was considered to be an appropriate maternal figure to fill the place first established by Livia; indeed, Suetonius explicitly refers to Livia in his description of the honours given to Antonia at this time:

post haec Antonia aviae, quidquid umquam Livia Augusta honorum cepisset, uno senatus consulto conguessit...³³

After this, by one decree of the senate he brought together for his grandmother Antonia every one of the honours ever grasped by Livia...

This suggests that the first Augusta was openly being used as a model for Antonia's new role. Antonia's main public image as Augusta is, however, specific to the reign of her son Claudius (who personally re-issued the title of Augusta to his mother as a posthumous honour) rather than her grandson Caligula.

Claudius' representation of Antonia continued the association between the Augusta and the imperial mother, and the various artworks commemorating Antonia after her death placed her firmly within context of the current, living imperial family. The goddess-figures assimilated to Antonia in her coinage, public statuary and engraved

³² Suet. *Claud.* 3.2, 41.2; Dio 58.11.7.

³³ Suet. *Gaius* 15.2.

gem portraits include the distinctly maternal figures of Ceres and Aphrodite/Venus Genetrix.³⁴ The Baiae Antonia, one of the most significant examples of her Venus iconography, presents her in the guise of Venus the mother, with a statue of Amor on her arm.³⁵ This statue belonged to a group that included not only Antonia's husband Drusus and son Claudius, but Claudius' two young children.³⁶ A mature bust identified as Antonia was found with heads of Germanicus and the younger Drusus, once again emphasising how much Antonia's public image revolved around her role as the *materfamilias* of a family.³⁷ On a large cameo, Antonia appears in the guise of Pax welcoming her son Germanicus home from war.³⁸ Indeed, while many of Antonia's extant statues have survived alone, it is clear that the large majority of her portraiture and her public image in general, particularly the larger part of that public image which belongs to the reign of Claudius, revolved around her role as a wife and mother of the imperial family, and an important dynastic link between her uncle Augustus and her sons. The main difference between her living and posthumous public image is that the emphasis during her lifetime was on her role as the mother of Germanicus, and the emphasis of her posthumous, Augusta imagery was on her role (or at least, position) as the mother of Claudius.

Although Agrippina Minor received the title Augusta as an imperial wife, it is her role as an imperial mother for which she is most remembered. Like the previous Augustae, Agrippina was closely associated with maternal goddesses such as Ceres and Cybele in her public image, which supports the portrayal of her as a figure of

³⁴ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, pp. 115-120, p.134. See also pages 191 (Venus) 202 (Ceres) of this thesis.

³⁵ **Figure 11.**

³⁶ Wood, *Imperial Women*, pp. 167-169.

³⁷ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 128.

³⁸ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, pp. 136-138.

imperial maternity.³⁹ As with Livia and Antonia, various cameo portraits depict Agrippina as a maternal figure and a symbol of fertility, sometimes depicted with a child who may be intended to represent Nero, and sometimes with other attributes of divine fecundity.⁴⁰ Agrippina certainly was a mother at the time of receiving the title Augusta, and her position as a mother is significant to the various theories as to exactly when she received the title. If, as Tacitus believes, Agrippina became Augusta upon Claudius' adoption of her son Nero, we have further confirmation that Augusta was still intended as a specifically maternal honour.⁴¹ On the other hand, if Dio is correct and Agrippina became Augusta before the adoption, then Nero's new status as the son of an Augusta may well have served to promote acceptance of his adoption, not only as Claudius' son but also as the first heir in line for the succession.⁴² Even before Nero became emperor, Agrippina's public image was closely tied to her relationship with him; she had appeared on coins alongside her husband Claudius during his reign, but she was also represented on coins alongside her son without any reference to Claudius at all.⁴³

Agrippina's role as mother of the emperor was substantial, with Nero heaping honours upon her at the time of his succession, and allowing her to take charge of all business matters relating to the empire.⁴⁴ Livia's prominence during the reign of Tiberius must always be considered in the light of Tiberius' lack of an imperial wife, which left her as the emperor's only important female relative; we do not know whether an imperial wife of Tiberius would have been given greater or lesser status

³⁹ See pages 202 (Ceres), 221 (Cybele) of this thesis.

⁴⁰ Wood, *Imperial Women*, pp. 305-307.

⁴¹ Tac. *Ann.* 12.26.

⁴² Dio 61.33.2.

⁴³ *BMC I Claud.* 82-83, 231-235.

⁴⁴ Suet. *Nero* 9; Tac. *Ann.* 13.2.

than her mother-in-law. Under Claudius, a definite feminine hierarchy was established through the honours he allowed to be given to his grandmother, mother and wives, although his mother was not alive to emphasise her precedence over Messalina, or to challenge the honours awarded to Agrippina. Under Nero, for the first time we have a living imperial mother alongside an imperial wife, and it becomes clear that the mother held the higher status. It was Agrippina Augusta, not Octavia, who stood at Nero's side at public events and received various honours from Nero and the senate. Inscriptional and numismatic evidence from these early days of Nero's reign emphasises his parents, promoting Nero as the son of Claudius and Agrippina rather than promoting them both as the parents of the emperor.⁴⁵ In the case of Claudius this is unsurprising given that his consecration allowed Nero to style himself *Divi Filius*, but including Agrippina in this honour gave her a status beyond that which Livia had attained during her own lifetime; Agrippina was publicly acknowledged as a figure who could reflect status upon the emperor simply because she was his mother.

One of the very first coins of Nero is an aureus bearing the legend *Agripp. Aug. Divi Claud. Neronis Mater* around portrait busts of mother and son on the obverse, with Nero's own titles relegated to the reverse.⁴⁶ This is the first time that anyone had shared an obverse with a ruling emperor upon coins struck by the official mint of Rome.⁴⁷ The two busts are confronted rather than jugate, which has the effect of presenting both faces without one partly obscuring the other. As Rose notes, this depiction of Nero and Agrippina facing each other was a numismatic format from Alexandria under the Ptolemies, to promote the consanguineous king and queen as a

⁴⁵ *BMC I Nero* 1; Corbier, "Male power and legitimacy," p. 186.

⁴⁶ *BMC I Nero* 1.

⁴⁷ Kleiner & Matheson, *I Claudia*, p. 66.

united couple, and was also used to represent queens of the Seleucid empire with their sons.⁴⁸ While this is a more subtle use of Egyptian imagery than Caligula, for instance, employed in his promotion of Drusilla, it is significant that the royal family of Egypt is evoked in this public coin issue that implies equality between the emperor and his mother, and firmly establishes the prominence of Agrippina at the beginning of her son's reign. The portrayal of Nero and Agrippina sharing a coin obverse, in both jugate and confronted fashion, was popularly imitated in the Eastern mints; the united image of mother and son was also commemorated in a relief sculpture from the Aphrodisias Sebastêion, in which a diademed Agrippina is seen to be placing a leafed crown upon Nero's head.⁴⁹

The portrayal of Agrippina as a high queen to Nero's subordinate king is further supported by the way that he placed all public and private business in the hands of his mother, and the public shows of devotion he made to her in the early days of his reign.⁵⁰ Far from exulting in the higher status she held than Nero's own wife, however, Agrippina championed the neglected Octavia, recognising that the threat to both of them came from the feminine influence of Nero's mistresses. Ironically it was Poppaea, who was to become Nero's wife and the next Augusta after Agrippina's death, who is credited with pushing Nero to rid himself of his mother's influence, and later for encouraging him to have Agrippina killed. While Agrippina's appearances on the state coinage of Rome dwindled sharply as Nero moved away from her influence, she remained a popular subject of various coins from the Eastern provinces during Nero's reign, including a series of silver didrachms from Caesarea Cappadociae which depict the emperor's mother on the

⁴⁸ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 47.

⁴⁹ **Figure 21**; Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 47.

⁵⁰ Suet. *Nero* 9; Tac. *Ann.* 13.2.

reverse of various Nero-types, along with the legend *Agrippina Augusta Mater Augusti*.⁵¹

Given that Poppaea and her baby daughter Claudia were both made Augusta upon Claudia's birth, their public images as Augustae cannot help but be infused with the themes of maternity and fertility. However, it is likely that the bestowal of this title had more to do with Nero's display of excess upon his baby's birth, rather than an overt attempt to present her, so early, as potential mother of his future heirs.

Nevertheless, one of the public buildings set up to celebrate the birth of Claudia was a temple to Fecunditas, either in honour of Nero and Poppaea's successful fertility, or in honour of Claudia's own potential fertility.⁵² Claudia and Poppaea appear together as goddesses on opposite sides of a coin after the death and deification of Poppaea, the first example of mother and daughter *divae* as well as mother and daughter Augustae sharing a coin.⁵³ This special relationship presented between a mother and daughter who are both Augustae was a precedent for later pairings including the public representation of Marciana with Matidia, Faustina Major with Faustina Minor, Faustina Minor with Lucilla and Julia Maesa with both Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea.

Sextilia's maternal role is vital to her public image as Augusta because she receives it as the mother of the emperor immediately after his accession, apparently to augment Vitellius' own public image by making him "son of an Augusta." This indicates that at this time the title Augusta has developed a status in its own right

⁵¹ *RIC I Nero* 11-16; *BMC I Nero* 422-427.

⁵² Tac. *Ann.* 15.23.

⁵³ **Figure 25, Figure 26;** Vermeule, "Livia to Helena," p.21.

rather than being a mere reward handed out to honour favoured women of the imperial family. In this instance, the political purpose of Augusta is clearly not to provide for future heirs, but to promote a new emperor as being connected to the traditions of the recent dynasty. Like Agrippina, Sextilia may well have met her fate at the hands of her son: Vitellius is said either to have killed her to fulfil a prophecy that he would rule a long time if he outlived his parent, or to have provided the potions for the suicide she craved.⁵⁴ The sources suggest that being forced into the role of imperial mother at such an age was overwhelming for Sextilia, and that this, combined with a sense of foreboding about the fate of her family, made her deeply unhappy.⁵⁵ While Sextilia (and, indeed, Vitellius) represent such a small and seemingly unimportant chapter of the history of the Augustae and the empire, Sextilia's reluctance to be a part of a new imperial dynasty makes an interesting comparison to the typical literary portrait of the desperately ambitious imperial mother such as Agrippina Minor, Plotina and the Severan Julias.

Vespasian's own mother received no posthumous public honours during his time in office; nor did his paternal grandmother, who had raised him from infancy and to whose memory he was devoted.⁵⁶ The only honours that Vespasian's late wife, Flavia Domitilla, may have received were as the mother of Titus rather than as the wife of the first Flavian emperor.⁵⁷ Domitilla's consecration and elevation to the status of Augusta can be seen as the fulfilment of a desire to demonstrate filial (or fraternal) piety rather than an acknowledgement of her personal virtues and maternal or maternal successes. A reverse type of a coin celebrating Domitilla Augusta

⁵⁴ Suet. *Vit.* 14.

⁵⁵ Tac. *Hist.* 2.64.

⁵⁶ Suet. *Vesp.* 2.

⁵⁷ Some, if not all of these honours, may have been awarded to Flavia Domitilla the Younger.

depicts a draped and veiled figure with the legend *Pietas August.*⁵⁸ Just as several goddesses had a new, Augustan aspect designed for their image, so it also became quite common to specify that the personification was Augustan; Domitilla is associated not only with the vital virtue of *Pietas*, but with the *pietas* of the Augusti. Looking at it now we can read this as ironic since the wife of Vespasian was dead before either of her sons (or her husband, for that matter) was named Augustus as part of a new imperial dynasty. Whether it was the elder or younger Domitilla who was deified; or, indeed, if both women were, then it seems likely that Titus was establishing a virtuous divine presence within his family -- indeed, an emphasis on Diva Domitilla's *pietas* could serve to remind the populace of his own *pietas* in remembering his mother/sister and consecrating her as a goddess. Diva Domitilla's reverse types generally utilise an "Augustan" aspect of the relevant goddess or divine personification, including Pax Augusta, Concordia Augusta and Fortuna Augusta.⁵⁹ This establishes Diva Domitilla as a goddess belonging to and responsible for the imperial family. Her commemoration was mainly confined to the reign of Titus, however. Diva Domitilla does appear on at least one coin type dedicated to Divus Vespasianus during Domitian's reign, but it is clear from the scarcity of examples that Domitilla's public image was of less importance to her younger son/brother.⁶⁰

Domitia, the only woman who was an imperial consort during the Flavian reign, was expected to be the mother of the next generation of Flavians, but only bore one child, a son who died before Domitian inherited the principate. Nevertheless, Domitia's fertility and maternity became a vital component of Domitian's propaganda once her husband became emperor. During his reign, Domitian ordered that his dead son be

⁵⁸ RIC II *Titus* 73; BMC II *Titus* 138

⁵⁹ RIC II *Titus* 70-2, BMC II *Titus* 136-7, 148

⁶⁰ BMC II *Domitian* 68.

deified, an unprecedented move that led to Domitia being celebrated on the coinage as *Mater Divi Caesaris* (“mother of the deified Caesar”).⁶¹ Representations of Divus Caesar as a baby Jupiter appear as a reverse-type on various aurei and denarii of Domitia, and various Pietas-themed coins of Domitia depict a draped, veiled female figure (either Domitia, the personification of Pietas or an assimilation of the two) reaching out to a small boy.⁶² Through such a strong public emphasis on her son as one who would have been an imperial heir, Domitia’s motherhood remains integral to her public image and artistic representation during her time as an Augusta.

Julia Titi, a potential mother of imperial heirs throughout her lifetime, was associated with maternal goddesses including Venus Augusta.⁶³ The establishment of Venus Augusta as a figure associated with imperial women at this time was particularly significant because this new aspect of Venus appears to combine elements of Venus Genetrix and Venus Victrix, making her a maternal figure who also symbolises military success and the safety of the city. This combination of maternal and military inspiration was to become a substantial aspect of the public image of later Augustae, particularly with the *Mater Castrorum* title established for Faustina Minor. Julia is one of several Augustae who are not mothers, and yet are associated with maternal imagery simply because of their potential to become mothers of imperial heirs; indeed, the emphasis on maternal imagery with Augustae such as Julia Titi demonstrates the continuing significance of maternity to the actual title Augusta, regardless of the maternal status of a specific woman who holds that title.

Plotina and Sabina, wives of Trajan and Hadrian respectively, were famously barren,

⁶¹ *RIC II Dom.* 440-443; Varner, “Domitia Longina,” p. 193.

⁶² Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 72-73.

⁶³ See page 192 of this thesis.

their husbands choosing suitable adult heirs as their successors. The “maternal” Augustae of this period, Trajan’s sister Marciana and her daughter Matidia, likewise failed to produce sons for the empire, although their line produced Sabina herself, who represented the main familial continuity between Trajan and Hadrian. There is little of a sense of desperation about the lack of sons among the “adoptive” Augustae and their emperors -- Trajan had inherited his role from Nerva, so why should he not do the same by choosing a responsible adult to take on the onerous duty of imperial heir? Choosing heirs by their suitability rather than blood certainly produced a more stable line than either of the previous dynasties had managed. As Cresswell notes, however, this idealised adoptive era came about mostly from necessity; Hadrian only chose a non-familial heir after the death of his wife, once it was certain he would not have sons of his own.⁶⁴ Barnes discusses Hadrian’s adoption plans, presenting support for a thesis that Hadrian never intended for Marcus Aurelius to be Antoninus’ imperial successor.⁶⁵ Trajan had even less control over his successor, as he never made a firm decision as to who would succeed him, even though his wife was too old to bear children upon his accession. Despite the successful use of adoption in the imperial dynasty at this time, the ideals of continuity through the production of children among the elite had by no means lessened since the age of Augustus; as Rawson notes, Pliny the Younger’s expressed gratitude upon being given the honorary status of parent of three children suggests that this was by no means a common honour, nor one to be taken for granted.⁶⁶ Had either Trajan or Hadrian fathered living sons, the adoption question would never have been raised.

This focus on continuity through male adoption did not render women and feminine

⁶⁴ Cresswell, *Augusta*, pp. 148-149; see also Dio 69.17.1.

⁶⁵ Barnes, “Hadrian and Lucius Verus,” p. 79.

⁶⁶ Pliny *Epist.* 10.2; Rawson, *The Family in Ancient Rome*, p. 10.

propaganda irrelevant during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. Indeed, this era is memorable for its public promotion of imperial women – those from previous dynasties as well as those contemporary to the emperors. The *imagines clipeatae* of Trajan's Forum depicted Trajan's most celebrated emperors, such as Augustus and Vespasian, but also included the portrait of Livia, demonstrating that her role and prominence in the early public image of the first imperial dynasty had not been forgotten, and that there was status to be gained from promoting the women of Trajan's family in conjunction with the first Augusta.⁶⁷ Somewhat surprisingly, the maternal aspect of the title Augusta was not neglected during this period; fertility is a major element of the public image surrounding not only Marciana and Matidia, but also Plotina and Sabina. However, it is distinctly possible that neither Marciana nor Matidia would have been honoured so greatly if Trajan and Hadrian's wives had borne children; indeed, it is extremely unlikely that they would have been honoured with Augusta if they themselves were not mothers.

Plotina's role as adoptive mother of Trajan's heir Hadrian is emphasised just as strongly as Trajan's role as his adoptive father, possibly because it was she who made the adoption possible after her husband's death.⁶⁸ Hadrian promoted both of his adoptive parents in his propaganda. While actual fertility/maternity was not vital in this instance, symbolic fertility was certainly significant. As a "mother," Plotina's portrayal in the literary sources shifts from a demure imperial wife to an ambitious, scheming kingmaker in the manner of Agrippina. Dio's suggestion that Plotina was driven by an amorous love (*erôtikê philia*) for Hadrian only serves to emphasise this comparison, as Agrippina was also rumoured to have a womanly as well as maternal

⁶⁷ Seelentag, *Taten und tugenden traians*, pp. 358-359.

⁶⁸ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p. 161.

love for her son.⁶⁹ It is worth noting, however, that little is made of the “relationship” between Hadrian and Plotina: it does not become a source of invective as it could easily have done in the hands of historians. If we look closely at Dio’s choice of words, he does not imply that Plotina’s role in securing Hadrian’s position is in any way unwarranted; it is modern scholars who have read this political move as something inappropriate for an emperor’s widow. Plotina was deified after her death, Hadrian commissioning coins in which she appeared with Trajan under the legend *Divis Parentibus*.⁷⁰ By appearing as one half of this divine couple, Plotina’s promotion to imperial “mother” served to remind the populace of Hadrian’s adoption, and to establish him as an emperor with two divine parents.⁷¹ This is evident throughout the substantial numismatic programme with which Hadrian honoured Plotina before her death. Hadrian also established a huge temple in posthumous honour of Divus Trajan and Diva Plotina, and in doing so completed the grand building project that was Trajan’s Forum.⁷²

Cresswell takes issue with Boatwright’s stance on the “infertility” of the imperial wives of the adoptive era: while Boatwright suggests a reduction in female power and influence at this time because their biological role in the imperial dynasty is “obsolete,” Cresswell counters that lack of a living child does not necessarily mean infertility, and that the potential for a child could be just as powerful a female weapon as the child itself.⁷³ This is perhaps a more relevant argument for Sabina rather than Plotina’s dynastic relevance, given Plotina’s age at the time her husband

⁶⁹ Dio 69.1.2; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 106.

⁷⁰ *RIC II Hadrian* 29-33, 232a-232b, 387; Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, p.191.

⁷¹ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p. 161.

⁷² Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, p. 253; Packer, *The Forum of Trajan*, p. 127, p. 131.

⁷³ Boatwright “Imperial Women,” p. 536; Cresswell, *Augusta*, pp.106-107.

came to power. However, Cresswell does concede a relationship between actual fertility and an imperial wife's power; indeed, she suggests that while fertility and motherhood were the greatest reasons that an imperial woman might be favoured, praised or promoted, that same fertility and motherhood could render an imperial woman politically "dangerous," and thus was more likely to be criticised and even vilified in print.⁷⁴ In particular, she cites the shift of Plotina (in her sixties) from imperial wife to imperial mother through the adoption of Hadrian, and marks that this is the only point at which rumours circulated about her sexual impropriety.⁷⁵

Marciana shared coins with her adult daughter Matidia after her death and deification, commemorating Matidia's rise to the status of Augusta even as her mother was promoted to *diva*.⁷⁶ Matidia is the first Augusta whose public image relies more closely on her position as the daughter of a previous Augusta than any relationship she has to the emperor himself. This is significant because the maternal emphasis of Augusta has previously concerned itself primarily with sons, or as in Poppaea's case with a daughter who was the firstborn child of an emperor. With Marciana and Matidia, we see a celebration of two imperial women whose relationship is not entirely defined by their connection to the emperor. Matidia herself appears on coins with her two daughters as children, as daughter of the Augusta.⁷⁷ She is represented on these coins as *Pietas Augusta*, the piety in this instance being maternal.⁷⁸ Marciana and Matidia both became dynastically relevant because Sabina, respectively their granddaughter and daughter, was given to Hadrian

⁷⁴ Cresswell, *Augusta*, pp. 107-108.

⁷⁵ Cresswell, *Augusta*, pp. 108-109.

⁷⁶ *RIC II Trajan* 758-759.

⁷⁷ Seelentag, *Taten und tugenden traian's*, pp. 450-451.

⁷⁸ *RIC II Trajan* 757; *BMC III Trajan* 659, 1088-1089; Bickerman, "Diva Augusta Marciana," p. 366; Seelentag, *Taten und tugenden traian's*, pp. 450-451.

in a dynastic marriage that seems to have been designed to support his later adoption. Given that the adoption did not formally occur during Trajan's lifetime, however, it is too much to assume that the celebration of Marciana and Matidia was entirely designed to reflect upon Sabina. Their maternity is presented as an integral part of their own public image as Augustae and imperial women during the reign of Trajan.

Like Plotina, Sabina was a childless imperial wife for whom fertility was nevertheless a vital component of her public image. Cresswell expands upon Temporini's discussion of the juxtaposition between Sabina appearing on the coinage as Augusta, and Hadrian's assumption of the title *Pater Patriae*, arguing that this evoked maternal connotations on Sabina's behalf.⁷⁹ Sabina is certainly portrayed in statuary and coin portraits as an archetypal figure of maternity or fertility, with attributes of maternal goddesses such as Ceres.⁸⁰ Cresswell presents a very compelling argument for Sabina standing in the position of *materfamilias* to the empire, citing the substantial maternal imagery discovered among Sabina's portraiture and numismatic representations, and the relative lack of importance that women actually produce children in order to symbolically represent the quintessential female role of Roman mother.⁸¹ Cresswell also suggests that, in surrounding his wife with dynastic imagery, Hadrian was providing a template to be used by his successors, in the hope that their wives would be fertile in the more traditional sense.⁸²

Sabina continued to feature in Hadrian's public propaganda after her death, and also

⁷⁹ Temporini, *Die Frauen*, p. 32; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 134.

⁸⁰ Spaeth, *Ceres*, pp. 178-179.

⁸¹ Cresswell, *Augusta*, pp. 134-137.

⁸² Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 137.

in that of his successor Antoninus Pius. The apotheosis panel that commemorates Sabina's consecration as a goddess can be seen as part of a propaganda programme which was intended to present Sabina as an honorary maternal figure for the imperial family.⁸³ Davies discusses the visual metaphors in this public artwork, arguing that Sabina's idealised, youthful appearance, her gesture evoking *pudicitia* and the visual association with Juno all not only contribute to represent Sabina as a "symbol of wifedom" but also to project her fictive fertility in such a way that it could be used to bolster the image of Hadrian's chosen successors.⁸⁴

By claiming Diva Sabina as his mother as well as Hadrian as his father on the inscription he placed above the entrance on Hadrian's Mausoleum, Antoninus was certainly supporting and laying claim to this image of Sabina as a figure of imperial maternity.⁸⁵ This decision to promote Diva Sabina as the adoptive mother of Antoninus may have been intended to convey a stronger sense of dynasty than a male-to-male adoption might otherwise have. It was certainly not harmful for Antoninus Pius to be publicly portrayed as the son of a *diva*, particularly in the early days of his reign before Hadrian himself had been deified. The public portrayal of both Plotina and Sabina demonstrates that women do not need to be technically fertile in order to represent fecundity or maternity; like the Vestal Virgins, who symbolised fertility despite (or indeed because of) their enforced chastity, the barren Sabina and Plotina were able to stand as symbolic mothers to the state without actually being mothers.⁸⁶ The good *matrona* (and, indeed, Augusta) can represent all aspects of femininity without necessarily fulfilling them.

⁸³ **Figure 45.**

⁸⁴ Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, pp. 113-114.

⁸⁵ *CIL* 6.984.

⁸⁶ Beard, "The Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins," p. 13; Beard, "Re-reading Vestal Virginité," pp. 173-174; Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, p. 128.

Faustina Major was a mother, and yet her public image revolved so tightly around her role as wife (and later *diva*) that the maternal aspect was not emphasised as much as might be expected. This could be due to the fact that she was not the mother of a male heir, although her daughter's marriage did ensure the continuation of the family dynasty. Faustina Major had, however, borne four children in total, two boys and two girls, which made her one of the very rare Augustae and imperial wives who could be honoured as a mother of (at least) three; at the time of Antoninus Pius' adoption by Hadrian, however, only their youngest daughter was still living.⁸⁷ Fittschen, who popularised the theory that Faustina Minor's range of portrait types were largely instigated by the births of her children, suggests that this may also have been the case for Faustina Major, though there is less physical evidence to support this idea.⁸⁸ Faustina Major's motherhood and successful fertility was acknowledged through her association with maternal goddesses such as Ceres, Juno Lucina and Cybele as Mater Deum.⁸⁹ As with Sabina, Faustina's status as Augusta was paired with her husband's status as *Pater Patriae*; while Faustina Major received the title Augusta in 139 CE before her husband received *Pater Patriae*, her coin types altered as soon as he took on that title later that year. Faustina's new coin legend, then, is *Faustina Aug. Antonini [Aug. Pii.] P.P.* which exactly reflected Sabina's last living coin legend *Sabina Augusta Hadriani Aug. P.P.*, and would have had the effect of promoting Faustina as Sabina's successor, as well as further supporting the continuity between the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus.⁹⁰ An extant coin type continues the theme of mother-daughter Augustae begun in honour of Marciana and

⁸⁷ *Hist. Aug. Antoninus Pius* 1.7.

⁸⁸ Fittschen, "Courtly Portraits," p. 50.

⁸⁹ See pages 205 (Ceres) 210 (Juno), 222 (Mater Deum) of this thesis.

⁹⁰ Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC III*, pp. 2-3; *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 327-334c, 1072-1073d, 1074-1098a.

Matidia by presenting Diva Faustina on the obverse and her daughter on the reverse under the legend *Faustina Augusta*.⁹¹ The younger Faustina gained a strong measure of public prestige through an emphasis on the reputation of her mother, and a perceived similarity between the two.

Fittschen observes the lack of a clearly defined, constitutionally established function for the “empresses,” and suggests that for them, as for all women in Roman society, dynastic continuity was their greatest responsibility. He also rather dryly states that “Empresses with children could naturally fill this role better than those without.”⁹² Despite the positive attitude towards the “childless yet maternal” imperial wives of the adoptive era, the fertility of Faustina Minor was a matter for great celebration, and probably a great deal of relief within the new imperial family. Faustina Minor not only produced many children for the imperial dynasty, but was also the first imperial wife to actually bear a future emperor during his father’s reign. She received the title Augusta during her father’s reign at seventeen years old, a much younger age than any other Augusta during the adoptive and Antonine eras, but for an understandable reason: the title was given to her (along with the right to be portrayed on coins) to commemorate the birth of her first child, as had been the case for Poppaea and had been intended for Messalina.⁹³ At this time, therefore, mature age and actual (rather than adoptive) maternity are both seen as acceptable measures of status for which an imperial woman can be deemed worthy of the title of Augusta.

Faustina Minor’s public image reflected a powerful enthusiasm about her fecundity;

⁹¹ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 407a.

⁹² Fittschen, “Courtly Portraits,” p. 44.

⁹³ Mattingly, *BMC IV* lxxvi.

each successful birth meant another public portrait type, charting Faustina's successful maternity in political terms.⁹⁴ One coin type depicting the bust of Faustina Augusta on the obverse presents a happy family scene on the reverse along with the less than subtle legend, *Fecund. Augustae*; a female figure (either Faustina or Fecunditas) stands with two children at her skirts and two more in her arms.⁹⁵ Other *Fecunditas* and *Fecunditas Augustae* variants portray Faustina or Fecunditas either with one infant, with two infants and a girl standing beside her, or with one infant and two children.⁹⁶ The reverse of a dupondius celebrating the birth of Faustina's twin sons, the first living boys she had borne, depicts a similar scene only with six children, the boys cradled in her arms and the four girls gathered around her skirts; the legend over this family portrait is *Temporum Felicitas*, referring to the fertile times heralded by the arrival of healthy male heirs.⁹⁷ Other Faustina reverse types, such as those with the legend *Saeculi Felicitas*, depicting the twins Commodus and Antoninus, make no reference to the boys' sisters.⁹⁸ The birth of healthy sons was evidently of great significance to Faustina's status as an imperial wife, since this, the portrait type Fittschen categorises as *Bildnistypus 7*, is the most widespread of her various portrait types in statuary as well as upon the coinage.⁹⁹

The goddesses most strongly associated with Faustina Minor reflect her fertility and maternity, including Venus Genetrix, Ceres, Juno Lucina, Cybele as Mater Magna,

⁹⁴ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, pp. 34-43, pp. 44-65, plates 1-43; Kleiner, "Family Ties," p. 51.

⁹⁵ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 675-676, 1634-1637.

⁹⁶ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 677-682, 1638-1641.

⁹⁷ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 1673-1677; Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, pp. 55-59.

⁹⁸ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 709-712, 1665-1666.

⁹⁹ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, pp. 55-59; Fittschen, "Courtly Portraits," p. 44; **Figure 51.**

Isis and Fecunditas.¹⁰⁰ Faustina was also awarded the title *Mater Castrorum*, “mother of the camp.”¹⁰¹ This title, which reflects a perceived connection between maternity and the military, was to become a significant component of the public image of later Augustae. It implies matronal patronage of the armies of Rome, and suggests that Faustina holds an honorary motherhood of all the men in those armies. While this would not have been intended literally, it can be compared to Livia’s reputation as a worker in wool; the fact that this role was publicly associated with the Augusta in question is more significant than whether or not she ever did anything concrete to deserve or fulfil such a role. That Faustina Minor was seen as a maternal patron of the Roman armies is important because it is the first time we see a female role (even a purely inspirational role) in the military success of Rome in any way acknowledged. Apart from more subtle connections between imperial women and Rome’s military success, such as Venus Victrix or Venus Augusta coin reverses, military imagery has previously been reserved primarily for the public image of the Augusti and the Caesars, while the imagery associated with the Augustae was mainly domestic, maternal or religious in nature; from Faustina Minor onwards, maternal and military imagery became a strong feature of the Augusta’s public image.

The *Mater Castrorum* coins released to promote this new maternal title during her lifetime present Faustina Minor in the role of priestess sacrificing before military standards.¹⁰² This implies that the *Mater Castrorum* role has a sacerdotal side to it; Faustina was perhaps expected to make offerings to the gods in order that the armies might be victorious, or that the soldiers be protected from harm. That this duty is

¹⁰⁰ RIC III M. Aurelius 1634-1641 (Fecunditas), See pages 194 (Venus), 205 (Ceres), 210-211 (Juno), 223 (Magna Mater), 224 (Isis) of this thesis.

¹⁰¹ Dio 72.10.5; *Hist. Aug. Marc. Antoninus* 26.8; CIL 6.4304.

¹⁰² RIC III Marcus Aurelius 1659-1662.

associated with maternity suggests that she might be expected to represent all the mothers at home who are making offerings in the hope that their loved ones be returned to them. Faustina's posthumous and post-consecration *Mater Castrorum* coins also depict her image, but in the more stately role of a goddess.¹⁰³ Her consecration, then, has put her in a position where she is no longer the priestess making offerings in order to protect her charges, but is perhaps the goddess to whom such offerings are made. That the role of "Mother of the Camp" is continued posthumously suggests that it was intended to have greater significance for Faustina's personal public image than the fleeting political advantage that could be gained by promoting the imperial wife as a maternal patron for the armies. The title *Mater Castrorum* is deemed important enough to appear on Faustina's obverse type in the majority of these posthumous coin issues, rather than the reverse legend it was during her lifetime.

Maternity and fertility do not dominate Lucilla's public image as greatly as they did for her mother's, though her motherhood is certainly relevant to her coinage, where she has reverse types dedicated to Juno Lucina and Cybele as *Mater Magna*.¹⁰⁴ More significantly, she had a large number of Fecunditas coin reverses, which clearly presents maternity as a key element of her public image during her time as an imperial daughter, wife and mother, as well as an Augusta.¹⁰⁵ Fittchen suggests that, like Faustina Minor, Lucilla's portrait types changed with every child she bore.¹⁰⁶ If this is the case, it is less evident than in the case of Faustina, possibly because Lucilla had fewer children, and a much shorter period in which her public image was

¹⁰³ *RIC III Marcus Aurelius* 742, 748-749, 751-753, 1551-1557, 1711-1712.

¹⁰⁴ See pages 205 (Ceres), 211 (Juno), 223 (*Mater Magna*).

¹⁰⁵ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 764-8, 1736-9; *BMC IV Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 336-7, 1197-1202, 1215-6.

¹⁰⁶ Fittschen, "Courtly Portraits," p. 44.

substantially promoted. Mattingly identifies the *Fecunditas* reverse type, in which a female figure is presented with two children, as evidence that Lucilla bore two children to Lucius Verus.¹⁰⁷ Dio refers to at least one adult daughter of Lucilla during the reign of Commodus.¹⁰⁸ The lack of detailed information about Lucilla's children suggests that if there was a second child it was also a girl or died young; even after the death of Lucius Verus and the diminishment of Lucilla's personal public image after her second marriage, a grandson of Marcus Aurelius who was child of an Augusta and Augustus would surely have received some kind of dynastic acknowledgment.

Crispina, wife of Commodus, would have had even higher expectations upon her as a potential mother of Caesars and Augusti. Her husband was the first emperor since the Flavians to inherit from his birth father, and the first emperor in the history of Rome to have been born to an Augustus and an Augusta who held these titles at the time of his birth. It is likely that he was likewise expected to sire his own sons for the *imperium*. Maternity does in fact play a significant role in the public image of Crispina in a similar manner to that of her mother-in-law Faustina Minor. Crispina is associated with *Fecunditas* and Juno Lucina on her coinage, which given her childless state can surely be seen as an acknowledgement of potential rather than proven fertility.¹⁰⁹ According to numismatic evidence, Crispina also received the title of *Mater Castrorum*.¹¹⁰ This, coupled with the lack of a known association between Lucilla and the title *Mater Castrorum*, suggests that the role of maternal patroness of the armies was intended to continue as an honour for the imperial wife,

¹⁰⁷ Mattingly, *BMC IV* cxxxix.

¹⁰⁸ Dio 73.4.4-73.4.5.

¹⁰⁹ *RIC III* 667 (*Fecunditas*), see page 211 (Juno Lucina) of this thesis.

¹¹⁰ *BMC IV Commodus* 418.

rather than the Augustae generally, although this would change under the Severans. As the wife of Commodus, therefore, and an Augusta, Crispina was seen as an honorary mother figure within the imperial family, and one with responsibilities that extended far beyond the familial sphere. Despite the short duration of her public life and her ignominious end, Crispina was, at least in the early days of her marriage, intended to take the place of Faustina Minor as the pre-eminent Augusta of the imperial family, and mother of the next generation of Augusti and Caesars.

That Manlia Scantilla and her daughter, Didia Clara, were made Augustae immediately upon the accession of Didius Julianus in 193 CE is of little surprise; Julianus was evidently trying to build as effective a public image as possible in order to augment his own image as the new emperor. After his murder, however, it is the treatment of these two Augustae that is of particular interest: the title of Augusta was officially revoked in the case of Didia Clara, although there is no mention as to whether this also happened to her mother.¹¹¹ We must assume that it was particularly important that the younger Augusta not continue to hold the title, as any children she bore would thus be sons or daughters of an Augusta, and might be considered a threat to the imperial throne. This tells us that no matter what honours were heaped upon the imperial wives, it was only as mothers and potential mothers that the Augustae were truly significant to the imperial family, and the succession.

Julia Domna, who like Faustina Minor was an imperial wife who produced sons for the succession, received various maternal titles including *Mater Castrorum*, *Mater*

¹¹¹ *Hist. Aug. Did. Jul.* 3.4, 9.3.

Augusti et Caesaris and *Mater Senatus et Patriae*.¹¹² In particular, *Mater Castrorum* appears in various public dedications and coins, becoming an integral part of Julia Domna's public image.¹¹³ Many of the inscriptions are dedicated by officers, soldiers or entire legions, suggesting that she was seen as a military patron, or at least as a figurehead of some significance to the Roman army.¹¹⁴ Also importantly, the title is another link between Julia Domna's public reputation and that of Faustina Minor; *Mater Castrorum* was awarded to Julia in 195 CE, the same year that her husband Septimius arranged his retroactive adoption into the Antonine family.¹¹⁵

While the *Mater Castrorum* can be seen as an attempt to emulate Faustina's own public image on Julia Domna's behalf, and to preserve the role as maternal patron of the armies for the most pre-eminent imperial woman of the new dynasty, the new maternal honorific titles Julia Domna received were just as important to her public image. *Mater Augusti et Caesaris* acknowledged the importance of a fertile imperial wife who had borne two male heirs to ensure the succession, and *Mater Senatus et Patriae* extended Julia's role as maternal patroness to the political sphere as well as the empire itself. Whether this latter title was awarded to Julia Domna during the reign of Septimius or Caracalla is disputed, although the most likely theory seems to be that it was awarded to Julia by the senate after the fall of Plautianus (and the exile of Plautilla) in 205 CE.¹¹⁶ *Mater Patriae* was a title which had once been suggested for Livia, but had never been officially awarded to any imperial Roman woman until

¹¹² CIL 8.2527, 9.2165; BMC V *Septimius & Caracalla* 56-59, 774, 788-790, *Caracalla* 11-13; PIR² 663 *Julia Domna*; Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," p.64.

¹¹³ CIL 6.1.120, 180, 220; RIC IV *Septimius Severus* 563a-563b, 567-567a, 860, 880-881, 884; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 166.

¹¹⁴ Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 171.

¹¹⁵ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," p. 123.

¹¹⁶ Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," p. 64.

Julia Domna.¹¹⁷

Julia Domna's sons were also often referred to in dedicatory inscriptions as "sons of Severus and Julia Augusta," an honour which recognises her as a source of status for her sons rather than the other way around.¹¹⁸ Julia's reverse types on the state coinage associated her with goddesses associated with maternity and fertility, including Vesta, Venus Genetrix, Ceres, Juno Lucina, Isis, Fecunditas and Cybele as *Mater Deum*, *Mater Magni* and *Mater Augusti*; Julia Domna was also represented in statuary with attributes of these various goddesses.¹¹⁹

More so than ever before, the imperial family under Septimius Severus was regularly represented as a family unit of parents and children. This emphasis on the public representation of the whole imperial family may be partly the reason why there are so many more surviving images of Julia Domna than any previous Augusta; many of these are statue or painted portrait groups including her husband and sons. Julia Domna's appearance on the state coinage of Rome also surpassed that of any previous imperial woman. She was honoured with far more portrait and coin types than any of her predecessors. As well as having a wide variety of coin issues devoted entirely to her own image, Julia Domna appears on the reverses of coins dedicated to her husband and sons, and in some cases shares coin faces with them.¹²⁰ The effect of this is not only to raise Julia Domna's status as imperial consort and mother (given that she has so many coin issues devoted entirely to herself, sharing

¹¹⁷ Suet. *Tib.* 50.3; Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.1; Dio 57.12.4, 58.2.3.

¹¹⁸ Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 187.

¹¹⁹ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 534, 550, *Caracalla* 374 (Fecunditas). See pages 188-189 (Vesta), 195 (Venus Genetrix), 205 (Ceres), 212-213 (Juno), 223 (Cybele), 224 (Isis) of this thesis.

¹²⁰ **Figure 62**; *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 312, 159, 175, 181a-181c, *Geta* 60a-60c, 71, 150a-150b, *Caracalla* 214.

coins with her male relatives can in no way be interpreted as a denigration of her status), but also continues the Severan theme of a united imperial family.

Occasionally, Julia's sons and/or husband appear on reverse types of her coinage also, but in a subordinate position to her image.¹²¹ On one of Septimius' reverse types, Julia Domna's portrait is depicted front-on with a son on either side of her, along with the legend *Felicitas Saeculi*; this legend also appears on Faustina Minor's coinage, making this one of many examples in which Julia Domna's public image utilises that of Faustina in order to create a perception of similarity between the two women.¹²² Appearing on reverse types of coins primarily dedicated to the emperor becomes more common for Severan Augustae than during previous dynasties, beginning with Julia Domna herself.¹²³

Plautilla's marriage and her public image as Augusta came at the expense of her mother-in-law's own status. Even if Julia Domna's weakened public image during the public life of Plautilla was more due to the influence of Plautianus than that of his daughter, it must be significant that the only challenge to Julia Domna's supremacy came at a time when a second Augusta had joined the imperial family. In this instance, however, Julia Domna was still an imperial wife as well as mother, as Plautilla's marriage to Caracalla ended before the death of Septimius. The senior imperial wife survived her younger counterpart quite effectively, though it is interesting to consider whether matters would have been different had Plautilla borne Caracalla a son, and thus been imbued with the kind of maternal status that Julia Domna had herself held for so many years.

¹²¹ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 571, 864, 886, *Caracalla* 394.

¹²² *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 255, 379; Kleiner, "Family Ties," p. 53.

¹²³ *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 342.

The maternity which was such a significant aspect of Julia Domna's public image throughout her public life, only became more so after her husband's death.

Caracalla did not marry again, and so Julia was the only significant imperial woman and only Augusta during her son's solo career as emperor. Unlike Agrippina, Julia Domna's public status remained consistently high during Caracalla's reign, with many inscriptions set up to honour her as his mother.¹²⁴ *Mater Castrorum*, despite its maternal as well as military implications, was not utilised as strongly during Julia Domna's time as imperial mother as it had earlier in her public life. Its significance was evidently more useful to the propaganda surrounding the imperial wife, particularly given the reliance on imagery associated with Faustina Minor during Julia Domna's early public life. Instead, other maternal titles are emphasised during this new phase of Julia's public life as imperial mother, with coin types displaying legends such as *Mat. Augg. Mat. Sen. Mat. Pat.*¹²⁵

The rise of the Severan Julias in the wake of Julia Domna's death, with Julia Maesa's two daughters Soaemias and Mamaea promoting their own sons as heirs to the empire, led to a new era of unprecedentedly powerful imperial mothers. The many inscriptional references to Julia Maesa's grandmotherly role in the imperial family, including *Augusta avia domini nostri, sanctissima Aug. avia imperatoris* and simply *avia*, would serve to distinguish between herself and her daughters, the actual imperial mothers.¹²⁶ While other Augustae had been grandmothers during their lifetime, it was rare for one to live to be the grandmother of an emperor, and this is the first time that we see an emphasis on an Augusta's role as *avia* rather than *mater*. Maternal titles were still a part of Julia Maesa's public image, however, as she was

¹²⁴ *CIL* 6.786, 6.1047-6.1049, 6.1063, 6.1071.

¹²⁵ *RIC IV Caracalla* 380-381, 588, 601.

¹²⁶ *PIR*² 678 *Iulia Maesa*.

known inscriptionally at least as *Mater Castrorum et Senatus*.¹²⁷ There is no surviving numismatic evidence that this title was acknowledged on the state coinage, although Julia Maesa is acknowledged as *Mater Castrorum* on a coin of Alexandria.¹²⁸

While Julia Soaemias' public image revolves around her role as mother of Elagabalus, she does not appear to have received the same wealth of titles (maternal or otherwise) as her own mother.¹²⁹ There can be little doubt that during the reign of Elagabalus, Julia Maesa was the pre-eminent Augusta.

The three wives of Elagabalus have quite meagre bodies of evidence extant as to their public images, despite all receiving the title Augusta and the right to be depicted on coinage.¹³⁰ We must assume that, as with other imperial wives, they were focal points of potential maternity, and that they would have had more substantial public images had they actually borne children to their imperial husband. The scarcity of images and information about these women only serves to further establish the fact that the imperial mother was a far more significant figure in imperial politics and propaganda at this time than the imperial wife; while imperial wives of the Antonines and early Severan emperors had received a kind of automatic status above any other Augustae contemporary with them, this was no longer the case during the reigns of the young Elagabalus and Alexander, who were both so greatly influenced by their mothers.

¹²⁷ *PIR*² 678 *Iulia Maesa*.

¹²⁸ Mattingly *BMC Vol. V* xxxv.

¹²⁹ *PIR*² 704 *Iulia Soaemias Bassiana Augusta*.

¹³⁰ **Figure 68, Figure 69, Figure 70.**

Julia Mamaea's public image was also heavily based on her maternal role, which is unsurprising considering that she was, like her sister, the mother of a boy emperor. Unlike Julia Soaemias, however, Mamaea's public image was not overshadowed noticeably by that of Julia Maesa, probably because of Maesa's death early in Alexander's reign. Julia Mamaea not only received the titles *Mater Augusti* and *Mater Castrorum*, but Alexander himself was often described as "son of Mamaea."¹³¹ Julia Mamaea's maternal titles went on to include *mater senatus et patriae* and, eventually, *mater domini nostri et castrorum et senatus et patriae et universi generis humani*, which leaves in no doubt that she is being upheld as a symbolic figure of powerful and all-encompassing maternity.¹³² Julia Mamaea shares coin obverses with Alexander, the two of them portrayed face to face with the legend *Imp. Severus Alexander Ag. Iulia Mamaea Aug.* around the busts, and *Mater Aug.* below the busts, making it clear that although they share this coin face equally, the point of the coin issue is to celebrate Julia Mamaea as the mother of the Augustus.¹³³

Alexander's wife Orbiana's coinage is far less substantial than her mother-in-law Julia Mamaea's, making it clear that it was the imperial mother and not the imperial wife who had the higher status at this time. Even when Alexander and Orbiana share an obverse on a coin type which was probably released to commemorate their marriage, Julia Mamaea appears as *Mater Aug.* on the reverse, a further reminder that the most prominent and significant Augusta of the period is not necessarily the woman who is married to the emperor.¹³⁴ Orbiana herself is numismatically

¹³¹ Grant, *The Severans*, p. 48.

¹³² *PIR*² *Iulia Avita Mamaea Augusta* 649.

¹³³ *BMC VI Severus Alexander* 539-543, 556, 733-736; *RIC IV Severus Alexander* 659-667.

¹³⁴ *RIC IV Severus Alexander* 318.

associated with Venus Genetrix; as with Julia Titi and Crispina, we must assume that this was intended to acknowledge her potential rather than proven fertility, as we have no evidence that Orbiana ever bore Alexander a child.¹³⁵

It is certainly credible that the promotion of imperial maternity was primarily intended to assure the public of the dynastic continuity of the imperial family, and secondarily to promote the concept of Roman motherhood in general, especially among the elite. However, in relation to the Augustae there is a far more powerful message being expressed through the public representation of Livia, Antonia, Agrippina, Poppaea, Sextilia, Domitilla¹³⁶, Domitia Longina, Marciana, Matidia, Faustina Major, Faustina Minor, Lucilla, Manlia Scantilla, Julia Domna, Julia Maesa, Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea, as well as the honorary mother figures of Plotina and Sabina. All of these women were publicly honoured as Augustae in such a way as to reflect honour and status upon their children, both natural and adoptive. Their maternity and a public emphasis on their maternity undoubtedly added to their own status as women belonging to the public sphere. At the same time, Claudia, Julia Titi, Crispina, Didia Julia, Plautilla, Julia Paula, Aquilia Severa, Annia Faustina and Orbiana can all be seen either as potential mothers of Caesars, Augusti, or even of daughters who could be married to potential Augusti. Most of these women had maternal elements running through their public image even though they had not borne children, which suggests that their potential fertility was being promoted as well as the fact that any children they did bear would almost certainly have a dynastic role in the imperial family. To be an Augusta was to be associated with motherhood and fertility, just as to be an Augusta was to be associated with

¹³⁵ See page 198 of this thesis.

¹³⁶ If the mother of Titus.

pudicitia, regardless of personal circumstance or reputation. It was to be a public representative of maternity as well as chastity and wifely virtue. The *matronae* of Rome had not only *univirae* and priestesses such as the Vestals to represent them as community leaders, they also had the Augustae whose public prominence necessarily placed them in a position where they stood as examples for Roman women to follow, whether or not the emperor of the time chose to make an issue of using his female relatives as exemplars of feminine virtue.

To be the daughter of an Augusta was a significant boost to an imperial woman's status, and implied that she was of great dynastic importance. To be the son of an Augusta was an even weightier honour, even if we have no formal definition of what those honorific implications were. Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vitellius, Titus, Domitian, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Commodus, Caracalla, Elagabalus and Alexander all made use of their status as sons or grandsons of Augustae during the period that they were establishing themselves as emperors, in some cases bestowing the title upon their mother/grandmother themselves in order to benefit from this. As Spaeth suggests, the maternal role of the imperial woman was twofold: she was to be the mother of imperial heirs, thus providing for the future of the empire, but she also stood as an honorary mother to the empire itself.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 47.

Chapter Four: The Augusta and the Goddesses

The divine imagery and iconography associated with the Augusta in her various incarnations had the effect of promoting the Augusta as a figure, if not equal to the Augustus, then at least worthy to stand at his side. The promotion of specific figures of female divinity in conjunction with the public image of the Augustae reflects the methods used to promote the public image of the Augustus. This is particularly evident on the state coinage, but also in statuary, inscriptions and, occasionally, in literary sources. As with the emperors themselves, an association between any imperial figure and specific gods had several functions: it implied divine support and endorsement of that imperial figure, it suggested that the attributes and virtues ascribed to these gods were also of importance to the imperial figure, and it promoted a general sense of that person's piety and devotion. With the Augusta, there is a clear pattern of divine representation from dynasty to dynasty. While some Augustae have closer ties to one or more goddess, there are five that most noticeably appear over and over again: Vesta, Venus, Ceres, Juno and Concordia. The importance of these particular goddesses to the public image of the Augustae is further evidence of the continuity that was maintained over the centuries, as the representation of later Augustae was influenced by the representation of their predecessors. Most importantly, the choice of these five particular goddesses further establishes and promotes the importance of domestic virtues and maternal concerns to the public image of the Augusta, as all five are closely associated with matronal worship, fertility, maternity and marital concord.

The association of imperial figures with the gods was a regular feature of imperial propaganda, from the earliest statues implying the divine descent of the Julian family to the assimilation of Severan emperors with eastern as well as Roman deities. These associations ranged from the appearance of various deities on the reverses of coins primarily dedicated to the emperor, to explicit statements such as Caligula's declaration that he was Jupiter. This association with gods and goddesses serves to imply that the emperor has the patronage of those deities as well as to imply divine virtues (or divinity itself) for the emperor; it also promotes the emperor's piety, by showing that he has respect and love for the gods, and that he acknowledges their ultimate power and glory, no matter how high he himself might be raised. By examining the religious aspect of the propaganda of each emperor, we can see patterns whereby gods and divine personifications were particularly important to that dynasty's public image, as well as those divinities that were specific favourites of certain emperors. Domitian, for instance, made great use of Minerva as a patron goddess.¹

This association between the gods and imperial propaganda also carries over to the members of the imperial family, particularly the heirs of the emperor and the Augustae themselves. From divine attributes on statuary to the appearance of divinities and personified virtues on coin reverses, what is of particular interest is the lack of male gods in the propaganda surrounding the imperial women. This follows the pattern of matronal worship in Rome, whereby the respectable married women of the city were expected to fulfill religious obligations on behalf of certain goddesses, or aspects of goddesses: the rites associated with the Venus Verticordia, Mater

¹ Suet. *Dom.* 4.4; Stat. *Silv.* 4.1.21-4.1.22; Mart. *Epig.* 6.10.9-6.10.12.

Matuta, Juno Lucina and Bona Dea are examples of these.² The rites of Roman matrons are predominantly associated with goddesses, particularly those with aspects primarily concerned with “domestic” issues such as fertility, chastity and wifely virtue.³ This is not to suggest that these goddesses and the rites performed in their honour were in any way trivial; fertility, for instance, was a matter of high importance to the Roman state and the emperor himself. It may be that the divine figures represented alongside the Augustae were specifically chosen to reflect the expected religious responsibilities of those Augustae. Certainly, all of the Augustae (except for the unusual case of Claudia Augusta) were *matronae*, and would thus have been qualified to take part in the traditional ceremonies of certain goddesses. As suggested previously, the Augusta may herself have filled something of a leadership role (either officially, unofficially or symbolically) among the *matronae* of Rome. This lack of male deities in association with the imperial women reflects Roman religious custom in general. In the matter of sacrifice, for instance, only female animals were sacrificed to female gods.⁴ It may simply not have occurred to the emperors to present the women of their family alongside male as well as female gods; indeed, it may have been culturally inappropriate to do so.

The portrayal of imperial women with divine attributes (those of general divinity as well as attributes which evoke a specific goddess) was gradually established as a tradition under the Julio-Claudians. This had not been a feature of the Augustan era, however, probably in deference to Augustus’ tendency to emphasise the modesty of

² Plutarch, *Life of Cicero* 20.1, *Life of Caesar* 10; Ovid, *Fasti* 3.202, 4.133-4.136; Propertius 4.9.21-4.9.36; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, p. 50; Scheid, “Religious Roles of Roman Women,” pp. 385-393.

³ As discussed particularly by Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores*, pp. 205-226, and Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, pp. 50-70.

⁴ Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion*, p. 80.

the women in his family. A sardonyx cameo from the reign of Tiberius depicts Livia as a priestess of Augustus gazing at a bust of her divine husband; Livia herself is represented with various attributes of existing goddesses including Cybele, Ceres and Venus Genetrix, with a hairstyle more appropriate to a female deity than a Roman matron, although she also wears the *stola* and a veil.⁵ It seems evident that there was a popular expectation that the Augusta would join her husband as a deity after her death; it was certainly more common for Livia to be represented with divine attributes after Augustus' deification than during his lifetime, and many of her statues with divine attributes are identified as part of her posthumous public image. Under the reign of Claudius, the addition of divine attributes to the images of imperial women and, in particular, the Augustae, was more firmly established in public as well as private artworks. On the *Constantiae Augusti* reverse type featuring Antonia Augusta, she becomes the first unambiguously identifiable woman to be represented in portraiture with divine attributes.⁶ This was, however, a posthumous honour, as were all other examples of the association of Antonia's image with the divine.

More significant of the changing representation of living women is the portraiture of Agrippina Minor during the reign of Claudius. She is the first woman whose public image was openly depicted with divine attributes during her lifetime, not only in the corn-ear crown that was to become a regular feature of her public image, but also in the diadem which often adorns her busts from the Claudian period onward, and was to become a regular attribute of imperial women.⁷ Divine iconography had been a feature of the public representation of the Augusti and Caesars from Augustus

⁵ **Figure 7**; Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 103.

⁶ **Figure 13**; *BMC I Claudius* 109-111; Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 154.

⁷ Barrett, *Agrippina*, p. 109.

onwards, but it was only with Agrippina that these overt associations with divinity were included in the public statuary and portraiture of living imperial women. As with many of the honours given to Agrippina that went above and beyond the previous honours awarded to imperial wives, this dramatic change in the conventions of imperial female portraiture was probably allowed because Agrippina was the first imperial wife to also be descended directly from Augustus. It is likely that one of the substantial benefits of portraying both Antonia and Agrippina with divine attributes was direct augmentation of the sacred status and image of their sons, the emperor Claudius and heir Nero. After Agrippina, divine iconography was quite commonly seen in the portraiture of the imperial women and in particular the Augustae. Often this use of divine iconography is general in nature, while other attributes suggest that one or more specific goddesses are being used to promote the sacred status of a particular Augusta. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the goddesses that were primarily used for this purpose were deliberately selected so that they not only promoted the sacred status of the Augusta in question, but also evoked specific types of sacred status, especially those which concerned matters such as fertility, maternity and domestic virtue: the attributes of good Roman wives and mothers.

Links between the public image of an imperial woman or Augusta and a goddess were most commonly represented on coins. The reliability as to the interpretation of numismatic imagery to determine imperial policy is a matter of scholarly debate; the repetition of particular images in relation to a particular member of the imperial family, however, is often too overt to be ignored. In the case of the imperial women, the fact that the deities and personifications who appear on their reverse types are exclusively female makes it clear that they have not been selected at random, which

suggests that the virtues and other associations linked with such divine female figures may also have been selected for specific reasons. Whether or not the chosen reverse types (and other examples of association between the women of the imperial family and specific deities) represent official imperial policy or not, there is still great value in examining which goddesses and personified virtues were chosen to be identified with the most prominent women of Rome. Indeed, the patterns that emerge from such a study suggest that there was deliberate intent behind the selection of which goddesses were to be officially associated with the imperial women and Augustae, whether or not that selection reflected the desires of the emperor (or his staff) as to how his family was to be publicly represented; even if there was no such intent behind the choices, the effect was certainly to publicly associate the women under discussion with a very specific range of virtues and attributes.

The information from mints less likely to be overly controlled by the emperor, such as those of the East, often reveals which local goddess was most important to that area, and which female deity that community thought most appropriate to be associated with the women they thought of as queens, goddesses and *sebastai*. In many cases these Eastern choices are still influenced by the Roman numismatics, or follow along such similar lines that there is little difference between those goddesses that the Romans saw in association the Augustae and those which the provincials saw in association with the Augustae. Coin types which feature an Augusta on the obverse and a divine figure (or other image) on the reverse only really begin during the Flavian era, though there are occasional elements of divine association on Augusta coins dating before this period.⁸

⁸ e.g. RIC I *Claudius* 54, 89-90.

Of all the goddesses associated with the Augustae, whether through numismatics, the divine attributes of statues, or other methods, five stand out as the most common deities who are used to promote the public image and sacred status of the Augusta throughout the various imperial dynasties. These are Vesta, Venus, Ceres, Juno and Concordia. As shall be demonstrated, each of these goddesses is primarily associated with the sacred aspects of issues generally believed to be “domestic” in nature: fertility, maternity, *pudicitia* and other forms of wifely and motherly virtue. These are also goddesses who are in some way associated with the rites of Roman matrons. The use of the same goddesses in this manner from dynasty to dynasty also demonstrates the continuity formed by the influence of early Augustae and their respective public images on the image and representation of later Augustae.

Vesta was always an important symbolic figure to Rome as goddess of the hearth, both the hearth of individual households and the metaphorical hearth of the city as a whole.⁹ She is not only associated with domestic virtue and chastity, but also with the symbolic protection of the city: if the flame tended by the Vestals were ever extinguished, this would, it was believed, signal the city’s destruction.¹⁰ It is not difficult to see why an association with the goddess Vesta as well as the Vestal priestesses was of value to the public image of the imperial women, as chastity, fertility and domestic virtue were integral elements of their public role. It was vital for the emperor to present the women of his family as role models for the *matronae* of Rome, and Vesta represented the virtues most desirable in a Roman matron.

Vesta’s association with the *matronae* and fertility has at times been read as

⁹ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.66.1; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 50-35; Parker, “Why were the Vestals Virgins?” pp. 56-57.

¹⁰ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.67.5.

conflicting with her status as a virgin goddess, and the chastity of her priestesses, but scholarship has established that the chastity of the Vestal Virgins was closely linked to the *pudicitia* (sexual modesty) expected of an ideal Roman matron.¹¹ As discussed by Beard, the origins of the Vestal Virgins may themselves be tied to the history of the royal women of pre-Republican Rome, their ritual tasks taking the place of those performed by the daughters of the kings; rituals which bear close resemblance to those which the *materfamilias* or presiding matron of each household might also be expected to perform.¹² An association between the Vestals and the imperial women (and, once the significance of the title was further established, the Augustae) may well have been intentionally created in order to present the most publicly significant women of the imperial family in the role of the presiding matron, not only of the imperial family, but also of Rome itself. The Vestals were connected to the Augustae through shared privileges and iconography, but also through the continuing representation of Vesta as one of the five primary goddesses whose image was used in public association with the Augustae.¹³

In Athens, during their lifetime, Livia and her stepdaughter Julia were represented as deities and worshipped alongside Hestia, a Greek hearth-goddess often identified closely with Vesta.¹⁴ Ovid also uses the phrase *esse pudicarum te Vestam, Livia, matrum* (“Livia, the Vesta of virtuous matrons”) in his *ex Ponto*.¹⁵ Despite this, and the continuing importance of Vesta and her priestesses to the Augustan as well as the

¹¹ Beard, “Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins,” p. 13; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 50-52; Sawyer, *Women and Religion*, p. 128.

¹² Beard, “Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins,” p. 13.

¹³ For further discussion of the shared iconography and privileges of the Vestals and the Augustae, see pages 231-246, 251-252.

¹⁴ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p.330; Fischler, S. (1998) “Imperial Cult: engendering the cosmos,” pp. 165-183 in Foxhall & Salmon, *When Men were Men*, p. 173.

¹⁵ Ovid *ex Ponto* 4.13.29.

entire Julio-Claudian regime, we do not see Vesta associated with the Augustae in an “official” sense until the Flavian period, which marks the first regular instances of coin issues devoted entirely to the Augustae. Vesta was regularly depicted on the reverse of coins celebrating Julia Titi during her lifetime.¹⁶ While Julia Titi was a *matrona*, her public image revolved primarily around her role as the daughter of Titus, making the modest and chaste image of Vesta quite appropriate for her. Plotina Augusta is also numismatically associated with Vesta, as part of a public image that strongly emphasised her modesty and domestic virtues.¹⁷ As Cresswell suggests, the indeterminate sexual status of Vesta (a virgin goddess sometimes addressed as Vesta Mater) is highly appropriate for Plotina, an imperial wife and adoptive rather than natural imperial mother.¹⁸ Sabina, another childless Augusta, is also commonly associated with Vesta coin reverses.¹⁹ Other virgin goddesses such as Minerva and Diana were not commonly associated with the Augustae, especially on the Roman state coinage, and this is undoubtedly because their virginity rendered them irrelevant to the public promotion of women whose primary responsibility was to be the mother (or in the case of Plotina and Sabina, honorary mother) of Augusti and Caesars. Vesta’s virginity, tied so closely with the fertility of the state and the rites of Roman matrons, allowed the wifely virtues of *pudicitia*, sexual modesty and fertility to be expressed in association with the Augustae.²⁰

¹⁶ *BMC II Titus* 144, 256-258, *Domitian* 258; *RIC II Titus* 57-58, 180, *Domitian* 231; Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC Vol. II* p. 114; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 50, p. 76.

¹⁷ *BMC III Trajan* 525-528; *RIC II Trajan* 728-732, 737, *Hadrian* 31; Matheson, “The Elder Claudia,” p. 131. Seelentag observes that Vesta, along with Pietas, had an important presence on the state coinage only during the early years of Trajan’s reign. Seelentag, *Taten und tugenden traianus*, p. 447.

¹⁸ Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 117.

¹⁹ *BMC III Hadrian* 914-918, 950-953, 1882, 1885-1886, 1902, 1904; *RIC II Hadrian* 397, 408, 410, 413, 1020, 1024, 1034, 1036, 1044, 1046.

²⁰ The most significant scholarship dealing with the indeterminate sexual status of Vesta, the importance of fertility and wifely virtues to her cult and the apparent contradictions within representations and traditions of the Vestal Virgins, is that of Beard as well as Beard, North & Price. Parker also discusses this issue, but his focus is more specifically on the connection between the chastity of the Vestals and the safety of the Roman state. Beard, “Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins,”

Under the Antonines, Vesta continued to appear on the coin reverses of the Augustae, demonstrating that she could be as easily associated with fertile and maternal figures of imperial femininity. Indeed, Vesta is one of the most commonly found goddesses on reverse types of Faustina Major -- the first imperial wife since Agrippina to have borne a child who lived beyond infancy -- during her lifetime and after her death and deification on the state coinage of Rome.²¹ The Vesta reverse types of Faustina Major closely resemble those used for earlier Augustae such as Plotina, Sabina and Julia Titi, forming a strong continuity of representation. While Faustina Minor's coin reverses often evoke those used for her mother, Vesta was less of a significant patron of her public image during her father's reign, with more emphasis on goddesses such as Venus, Pudicitia, Juno and Concordia. Faustina Minor has a reverse type referring to the Vestal priestesses during her father's reign, but there are no extant reverse types for her during this period that actually feature Vesta.²² This was most likely intended to make a clear distinction between the public image of Faustina Minor and that of her mother; even after Faustina Minor was named Augusta, her late mother continued to be widely represented on the coinage of Antoninus Pius. During the reign of Marcus Aurelius, however, a few Vesta reverse types do exist for Faustina Minor, with similar iconography to that used by her mother.²³ Likewise, there are a number of extant Vesta reverse types for Faustina's daughter Lucilla during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, of similar style to

passim; Beard, "Re-reading Vestal Virginity," *passim*; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 50-52; Parker, "Why were the Vestals Virgins?" *passim*.

²¹ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 334, 342, 368-371, 1083, 1098, 1103, 1124-1126, 1130, 1151, 1177-1181, 1187, 1196, 1200; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 37, 47-48, 338, 435-446, 485-486, 1519-1522, 1529-1530, 1536-1538, 1580-1585, 1590-1595, 1599-1602.

²² *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 1384.

²³ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 737, 1689-1690; *BMC IV Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 175-176, 1004.

those used on behalf of her mother and grandmother.²⁴ As with Faustina Minor, however, Vesta is not one of the most significant goddesses used in relation to Lucilla's public image, particularly in comparison to Faustina Major. The overall implication of this, and particularly the distinction between Faustina Minor's association with Vesta during her father's and then her husband's reign, is that from Trajan onwards, the representation of Vesta was more specifically associated with the imperial wife than the Augustae as a whole group. This may be because of the historical implications of the Vestals representing the daughters of the ancient kings.

Vesta's numismatic association with the Augustae and particularly the imperial wife continued under the Severans. Vesta appears on coin reverses of Julia Domna, whose public image and choices of patron goddesses were greatly influenced by a desire to emulate the popularity of previous Augustae, particularly Faustina Major and Minor.²⁵ Reference back to the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius (with the careful omission of the reigns of Commodus, Pertinax and Didius Julianus) appears to have been a deliberate policy of Septimius Severus, and this was carried through to the public image of Julia Domna.²⁶ For the first time on coin reverses associated with the imperial women, on Julia Domna's coins during the reign of Septimius Severus we see epithets applied to Vesta's legend, including *Vesta Mater* and *Vesta Sancta*.²⁷ This shows a deliberate attempt to define the aspect of Vesta that was thought to be particularly relevant to her association with the Severan

²⁴ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 788-789; *BMC IV Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 325-326, 1178-1181, 1190-1193.

²⁵ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 538, 582-587, 587a, 648, 843, 867-869, 891-894, *Caracalla* 390-392, 593-594, 606-607; *BMC V Wars of the Succession* 56-57, 491-493, *Septimus & Caracalla* 91-101, *Caracalla* 217-219, 231-233; Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," pp. 122-123.

²⁶ Bartman "Hair and the Artifice," p. 23; Strong, "Review of *The Portraits of Septimius Severus*," p. 234.

²⁷ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 583-587, 587a, 648, 868-869, 892-894; *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 95-101, 622-624.

imperial wife: in this case the goddess's maternal and sacred nature. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Julia Domna is also credited with the restoration of the Temple of Vesta and Atrium Vestae during her husband's reign, creating another strong link between that goddess and the women of the imperial family.²⁸ Julia Domna's public image can be seen to have influenced the later Augustae of the Severan reign, and Vesta reverse types appear on coins dedicated to Elagabalus' first two wives, Julia Paula and Aquilia Severa, and also Julia Soaemias, Julia Maesa and particularly Julia Mamaea.²⁹

Vesta's association with the *matronae* of Rome, and the role of her priestesses as figures of female religious ritual would seem to be the primary reason for her connection to the Augustae. As a goddess, she was symbolic of all the same virtues and responsibilities that the Augusta herself was supposed to represent: chastity, *pudicitia*, domestic virtue and ritual, and even fertility and maternity. The association between the Vestal Virgins and the *pontifex maximus* may also have been a strong reason for the continuing association between the Augusta and Vesta, especially given that the most prominent Augustae whose public image made use of Vesta were imperial wives and thus wives of the *pontifex maximus*.

Venus, particularly as Venus Genetrix, is a goddess who was vital to the Julian family. Like Vesta, she was a goddess that Augustus liked to use in association with his family; indeed, as an "ancestor" of the Julian family, Venus was a prominent and

²⁸ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," p. 124.

²⁹ *RIC IV Elagabalus* 224, 231, 246-248, 276; *Severus Alexander* 359-364; *BMC VI Severus Alexander* 380-391, 440-448.

highly significant goddess in Augustan propaganda.³⁰ The iconography of Venus was not greatly relevant to the portraiture of Livia before her adoption as a Julian; her stepdaughter Julia was more closely identified with Venus in her public image. This did not prevent Ovid from declaring that Livia had the beauty of Venus (matched of course with the morals of Juno).³¹ There are also a few fleeting associations made between Livia and Aphrodite in eastern inscriptions during the reign of Augustus.³² After Livia's adoption into the Julian family, she began to be associated (and in some cases, assimilated) more substantially with Venus Genetrix, and that association was further established after her death and deification. This has the effect of tying Venus Genetrix to the title of Augusta, rather than just to the public image of Livia Drusilla. Livia was certainly associated with Venus Genetrix during the reign of her grandson Claudius, who did much to emphasise his descent from the first Augusta. Two Claudian relief portraits, one at the Aphrodisias Sebastêion and one at Ravenna, have been identified as depictions of Livia in the guise of Venus Genetrix: on the Ravenna relief the Venus-Livia is paired with a Divus Augustus who is portrayed with attributes of Mars.³³ Rose supports this identification by identifying the composition as having been copied from the central pediment statues of the temple of Mars Ultor in Rome.³⁴ It is also worth noting that the hairstyle of this figure is distinctly not that of Antonia, as the coiffure covers the ears while Antonia's hair is always pulled tightly back. The Ravenna Venus-Livia is crowned with a diadem, a divine attribute with which Livia was rarely portrayed during her lifetime. The circular (rather than crescent) diadem is embellished with a

³⁰ Ovid *Fasti* 4.123-4.124; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, p. 123; Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, pp. 148-149.

³¹ Ovid *ex Ponto* 3.1.117-3.1.118.

³² Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p. 327.

³³ **Figure 18**; Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 60.

³⁴ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 60.

floral design; numismatic scholars often refer to this type of diadem as a *stephanê* in order to make a distinction between this and the crescent diadem, though there is no suggestion that either of these diadem types is considered more substantially sacred or meaningful than the other.

The use of attributes of Venus to augment the portraits of the Augustae was further established during the reign of Claudius with the representation of Antonia.

Antonia's "direct descent" from Julius Caesar (and thus from Venus herself) connected her with that goddess in popular belief as well as portrait iconography.

The Antonia statue at Baiae is the strongest example of this, representing Antonia in the guise of Venus, complete with a miniature Amor statue upon her arm.³⁵ Wood suggests that the iconography of this statue evokes Korê as well as Venus, and notes the ancient precedents for assimilation between Korê and Aphrodite, particularly among the Romans.³⁶ The *Genetrix* aspect of Venus was particularly important to Antonia's public representation during the reign of Claudius because of her vital posthumous role as the mother of the emperor, and as the maternal link through which he could claim relationship to the Julian family. Indeed, by emphasising (even by implication) Antonia's direct descent from Venus, Claudius was able to also claim descent from the goddess who was the ancestress of the Julian family.

According to Dio, Nero built a shrine to Poppaea after her death and deification with an inscription referring to her as *Sabina thea Aphrodite* ("Poppaea, the goddess Aphrodite").³⁷ The implication here is that Nero's deified wife has actually been transformed into an aspect of the goddess. Rose has suggested that this assimilation

³⁵ **Figure 11.**

³⁶ Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 166.

³⁷ Dio 63.26.3.

of Diva Poppaea/Sabina to Aphrodite/Venus was intended to reflect a similar assimilation between Venus and Drusilla during the reign of Caligula, and that Poppaea's image as a goddess was closely based on that of Drusilla.³⁸ However, this would seem unlikely, as Venus was herself of far greater significance to Nero's propaganda programme and the public representation of the imperial family at this time than was the first *diva* of the Julian family, and it is more likely that it was Venus' own role as ancestress of the Julian family that Nero was referring to with this gesture.

Despite the popular use of Venus Genetrix in association with the women of the Julio-Claudian imperial family, and the undoubted benefits of claiming descent from such an important goddess, the emperors who came immediately after the Julio-Claudians did not choose to continue this tradition. A number of factors may have contributed to this: the notable lack of any female-related propaganda in Rome between the reigns of Nero and Titus, the inability to claim direct kinship with Venus as the Julians had (though Vespasian and his immediate predecessors were keen to emphasise other ties between themselves and the Julian family) and possibly a desire to remove themselves officially or symbolically from many of the more blatant propaganda themes of Nero's reign. In any case, when the Flavians re-introduced the tradition of publicly commemorating the women of their family under Titus and then Domitian, a newly created aspect of Venus had taken the place of Venus Genetrix in the imperial familial pantheon.

Venus Augusta, who appears on reverse types of both Julia Titi and Domitia, is

³⁸ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 49.

physically depicted as a figure naked to the hips with a helmet and spear, suggesting that she has more in common with Venus Victrix than Venus Genetrix.³⁹ The Domitia coins actually represent Domitia herself as the goddess, complete with her own hairstyle and a diadem. By appropriating the goddess on behalf of the “Augustan” family, the Flavians were able to use the image of Venus in ways similar to those used by the Julio-Claudians, without stretching credulity with an actual claim of descent. During the reign of Hadrian, Sabina’s public image is associated with both Venus Victrix and Venus Genetrix, with Venus appearing on many of her coin reverses, but also through statue portraits that portray Sabina as the goddess Venus.⁴⁰ The scarcity of references to Venus Genetrix during the majority of the Flavian and adoptive dynasties may have less to do with a deliberate distancing from the favourite patrons of the Julians, than with the distinct lack of children in the imperial houses; while Domitia, Marciana and Matidia all bore children, they were either female or died young, meaning that none were imperial heirs. The important role of Venus Genetrix under the Julio-Claudians was to highlight the only real fertility that counted in an imperial household: the production of healthy male children to inherit from the emperor. The return of Venus Genetrix under Sabina may have been intended to support her role as “mother” of Antoninus Pius, a role in which she was placed posthumously.⁴¹

The successful fertility of Faustina Major and particularly Faustina Minor allowed for a more substantial re-introduction of Venus as a patron goddess of the

³⁹ *RIC II Titus* 55-56, *Domitian* 230; *BMC II Domitian* 256-257.

⁴⁰ *BMC III Hadrian* 920-921, 944-949, 1883-1884; *RIC II Hadrian* 396, 412, 1035, 1045, 1049-1050; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 153.

⁴¹ *CIL* 6.984; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 134; see previous discussion about the maternal significance of Sabina on pages 161-162 of this thesis.

Augustae.⁴² However, the *Genetrix* aspect was not overly emphasised in the case of either Faustina. Faustina Major's coin reverses generally present Venus without epithet, or return to the Flavian aspect of Venus Augusta.⁴³ Faustina Minor, whose coin reverses far more frequently present Venus than those of her mother, is also associated with a variety of aspects of Venus, including *Victrix*, *Augusta* and *Felix*.⁴⁴ It is particularly strange that *Felix*, an aspect of Venus not previously associated with the Augustae, should be included when *Genetrix* for the most part is not. *Felix* has connotations of fertility, which are certainly relevant to the overall public image of Faustina, and the more military aspects of Venus such as *Victrix* and *Augusta* are likewise relevant, as Faustina Minor's public image involved more military and political aspects than was the case with previous Augustae. Lucilla, the daughter of Faustina Minor, has Venus *Genetrix* reverses as well as those depicting Venus without epithet and Venus *Victrix*, but there is certainly no overall emphasis or suggestion that Venus *Genetrix* was of particular interest to Lucilla's public image.⁴⁵ These three Antonine Augustae were all mothers, thus demonstrating that the imperial family was no longer entirely reliant on adoption to continue the imperial line. Venus certainly seems to have been relevant to the maternal emphasis within the public image of these Antonine Augustae, but her *Genetrix* attribute was not utilised as much as might have been expected. Rather than representing a deliberate move away from the traditional aspect of "Venus the Ancestress" this may instead have been the result of an overall Antonine policy (official or otherwise) to utilise a

⁴² See previous discussion about the importance of Faustina's abundant fertility to her representation in public life and art on pages 164-166.

⁴³ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 333, 342, 366-367, 1081-1082, 1097, 1153-1154; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 46, 432-434.

⁴⁴ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 510, 512-517, 1387-1388, 1408-1410; *M. Aurelius* 719-723, 724-732, 734-736, 1680-1688, 1718; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 46, 432-434, 1061-1067, 1082-1083, 1091, 1095, 1120-1123, 1132, 2147-2150, 2160-2165, 2169-2172, 2185-2186, 2193; *Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 159-161, 163-170, 174, 956-965, 999-1004, 1593-1594.

⁴⁵ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 783-787, 1762-1778; *BMC IV Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 320-324, 353-356, 839, 1166-1177, 1187-1189, 1212-1213, 1224-1227.

variety of aspects of a deity in the propaganda of the imperial family. This provides a direct contrast with the propaganda style of the previous dynasties, that preferred to choose one “patron” aspect of a particular god and emphasise that above all others. This tendency to associate many aspects of a goddess with a particular Augusta is certainly a feature of Antonine numismatic evidence, and may in part be a result of such a wider number and variety of coins being struck in honour of the Augustae than in any previous dynasty.

The traditional aspects of Venus, *Victrix* and *Genetrix*, also appear on coin reverses dedicated to Julia Domna along with (less commonly) Venus Felix.⁴⁶ As with Faustina Minor, the dual emphasis on Venus’ military and maternal aspects is quite appropriate, as Julia Domna was the mother of two sons as well as the wife of the general who had won the *imperium* of Rome.⁴⁷ A new aspect of Venus, *Caelestis* (“heavenly” or “of the heavens”), was introduced to imperial female propaganda specifically to honour Julia Domna, and continued in usage throughout the Severan period with other Augustae.⁴⁸ Benario notes that Venus Caelestis is the goddess most associated with Julia Soaemias, and suggests that this may be due to the emperor Elagabalus’ own obsession with the Carthaginian goddess Caelestis, whom he “married” to his own deity after whom he was named.⁴⁹ This does not explain, however, why Venus Caelestis was introduced into the public image of Julia Domna long before her great-nephew took power; indeed, it may be that the association

⁴⁶ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 535-537, 578-581, 630-633, 645-647, 842, 846, 866, 887-890, *Caracalla* 397-399, 591-592, 604-605; *BMC V Wars of the Succession* 47-55, 422-424, 488-490, 498, *Septimius & Caracalla* 83-90, 619-621, *Septimius, Caracalla & Geta* 123, 148, *Caracalla* 216, 229-230.

⁴⁷ The importance of these themes to Julia Domna and Faustina Minor’s public image have already been established by the discussion of *Mater Castrorum* in the previous chapter, pages 166-170.

⁴⁸ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 604; *BMC V Septimius, Caracalla & Geta* 149; *PIR² Iulia Domna Augusta* 663, *Iulia Soaemias Bassiana Augusta* 704.

⁴⁹ Benario, “The Titulature of Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea,” p. 12; Herodian 54-55. Herodian names this goddess “Urania.”

between Julia Domna and Venus Caelestis (and the corresponding relationship between Julia Soaemias and Venus Caelestis) was the reason for Elagabalus' interest in the Carthaginian goddess Caelestis, adding an incestuous frisson to the "marriage" he enacted between the two gods. Taken on its own, aside from the associations with Elagabalus, the introduction of Venus Caelestis to Julia Domna's numismatic iconography has religious rather than military or maternal implications, and may have been intended to reflect Julia Domna's substantial role as a focal point of matronal religion.⁵⁰

The Antonine tradition of using a variety of aspects of Venus (as with other goddesses) in association with the Augustae also continues throughout the Severan period with Julia Maesa, Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea as well as their daughters-in-law.⁵¹ Venus Genetrix appears on the coins of mother figures such as Julia Mamaea as well as two wives for whom we have no evidence regarding their fertility and maternity: Julia Paula, first wife of Elagabalus and Orbiana, wife of Alexander. In these instances, the emphasis on Venus Genetrix can be read as potential rather than proven fertility, and may represent a publicly acknowledged hope that they would provide the imperial family with an heir.

The use of Venus in conjunction with the public image of Augustae, then, can be divided into two types. The earlier dynasties tended to appropriate a single aspect of a goddess and use her extensively in their iconography, as was the case with the Julio-Claudian women and Venus Genetrix, the Flavian women and Venus Augusta,

⁵⁰ See Chapter 5 of this thesis, particularly pages 241-243.

⁵¹ *RIC IV Caracalla* 368-369, 579, 582, *Elagabalus* 222-223, 230, 24024-5, 275, 398, *Severus Alexander* 326-327, 350-358, 694-707; *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 426a-430, 807-808, *Elagabalus* 44-60, 177, 293, 323-325; *BMC VI Severus Alexander* 151-155, 197-203, 712-724, 988-989.

and to some extent, the Trajanic-Hadrianic women and Venus Victrix. From the Antonines onwards, however, we see a variety of aspects of Venus being used almost indiscriminately. Even the creation of the new, Severan aspect of Venus, *Caelestis*, did not return to the habit of emphasising a single aspect; it merely added one more to the large pool of Venus epithets to be used. The use of Venus Genetrix and Venus Felix can be connected to the maternal portrayal of many Augustae, usually in the case of proven rather than honorary fertility. The use of Venus Augusta and Venus Victrix supports the notion of the Augusta (and in many instances, imperial wife) standing as a symbolic figure of military success. This is not contradictory to the traditional roles of women in Ancient Rome: the chastity and domestic ritual of the Vestals, for instance, were not only thought to ensure the safety of the city, but also to ensure the victory of the armies.⁵² It is not unreasonable, therefore, to suggest that the Augustae, whose sacred status was already tied closely to that of the Vestals, might also have had their maternal and domestic virtues held up as a symbolic necessity for the military success of Rome. In any case, the specifically maternal aspect of Venus Genetrix (and to a lesser extent, Venus Felix) was primarily associated with the Augustae who were actually mothers, and occasionally with those who were expected to shortly prove their fertility.

The most likely reason for the change in the use of goddess figures (from a single aspect to a range of aspects) from the Antonines onwards is that more coins were released in honour of the Augustae from this point onwards, as well as a larger number of coin types. This also corresponds to the rise in status of the imperial wife: from this point until the death of Alexander, all imperial wives received the title

⁵² Cic. *Pro. Font.* 46-48; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 52-53.

Augusta almost immediately upon their marriage (even if that marriage was to a Caesar rather than an Augustus) and had coins released in their honour from the reign of Marcus Aurelius onwards. These later emperors evidently had fewer qualms about the honours due to the imperial women than did their predecessors, and were less squeamish about creating dramatic precedents in the public representation of their wives and daughters.

The increasing marginalisation of Venus Genetrix as a symbolic figure of fertility and maternity for the imperial women after the Julio-Claudians is less surprising if one examines the history of Ceres and the Augusta. A goddess of agricultural fertility, Ceres was strongly associated with the Augustae throughout the various dynasties, and may have been a preferable figure to symbolise maternity and fecundity because she was so wholly devoted to those themes. The priestesses of Ceres were the only women apart from the Vestals to administer a state cult, and the rites of Ceres were performed in public, primarily by women: mothers and daughters singing, walking in procession and performing public rituals in honour of Ceres and her daughter Proserpina (Korê).⁵³ While Venus Genetrix was most commonly brought into association with Augustae who had borne children, Ceres was associated equally with the infertile and fertile Augustae, her symbolic fertility referring to the abundance and prosperity of the state as well as that of individual women. Spaeth suggests that the association between the imperial women of Rome and the goddess who symbolised agricultural fertility was designed to promote a connection between Ceres and the *princeps*, therefore allowing him a close relationship with a vital goddess who was predominantly attached to the feminine

⁵³ Livy 27.11.1, 27.37.4-27.37.15; Phlegon of Tralles, *On Wonders* 10.

sphere.⁵⁴ Augustus himself was often depicted wearing the *corona spicea*, a symbolic attribute of Ceres, as were several later emperors.⁵⁵ The promotion of various imperial women and Augustae as figures associated with Ceres, therefore, was not because the emperor could not himself be associated with this goddess without a female proxy. Instead, the evidence suggests that the emperor's own public image benefited from a specific association between the women of his family (and their fertility and maternity) and the abundance of Ceres.

The primary examples of this association between Ceres and the Augustae are the divine attributes most commonly attached to the statuary of imperial women: the *corona spicea* or corn-ear crown, the cornucopia of abundance, and a bouquet of poppies and corn-ears held in the hand. It is important to recognise that such icons are not necessarily references to Ceres; other agricultural goddesses such as Flora and Fecunditas also bear such attributes. The *corona spicea* is a term which can refer to various crowns of leafy, grain-like or even floral matter. The difference between a crown of laurels, of flowers or of corn-ears on a portrait as small as those on coins, for example, is often based on guesswork or the appearance of similar "crowns of nature" on statuary. Poppies, however, are definitively associated with Ceres and the Eleusinian rites.⁵⁶ Whether or not a *corona spicea* or other Ceres-associated icon such as the sheaf of grain was specifically designed to evoke Ceres on each occasion it was used, it is clear that these icons do refer to agricultural fertility and abundance, themes most commonly celebrated in the Roman religious arena with reference to Ceres and her counterparts. In addition to the divine attributes used on the portraits of imperial women, we have further evidence for the

⁵⁴ Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 121.

⁵⁵ Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Ovid *Fasti* 4.530-34, 4.547-48.

use of Ceres and her iconography in the public image of the Augustae, many of whom appear in portraiture as the goddess, or appear on coins with Ceres reverse types.

The earliest artistic representation of Livia that we have in statuary, dating from 31 BCE, is a sculptural group that stood in the sanctuary of Eleusis where Augustus (then Octavian) was initiated into the rites of Demeter and Persephone. It is noteworthy that he was honoured thus so soon after the battle of Actium, before he was established as the *princeps* of the empire, and it is particularly intriguing that an image of Livia was included in this sculptural group, since she almost certainly would not have been present during her husband's initiation.⁵⁷ It may be that the matriarchal nature of Ceres-worship made Octavian's wife an important factor in his initiation, even at a distance. Wood suggests that the relationship between Livia and Demeter that is reflected in later inscriptions and statue representations may have started at this early point and that Octavian would certainly have recognised the value of identifying his wife with the popular mother goddess.⁵⁸ At this point in time, it was a realistic hope that Livia might bear Octavian's children; even if this were not the case, her role as the mother of two healthy sons was hugely significant to the way she was portrayed in public, and a close association with Ceres only served to augment this public representation.

A variety of statue portraits of Livia depict her either in the guise, or with specific attributes of Ceres. One of these, currently in the Louvre, shows Livia veiled, draped

⁵⁷ Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 92.

⁵⁸ Wood, *Imperial Women*, pp. 92-93.

and holding both the cornucopia and a sheaf of wheat.⁵⁹ The *corona spicea* over her distinct hairstyle is made up mostly of flowers, and her face is calm and peaceful. Wood suggests that the maternal goddess of the *Ara Pacis Augustae* (who, if not a representation of Ceres herself, shares many of her attributes) shares a resemblance with the portrayal of Livia on the same monument.⁶⁰ Livia is also assimilated with Ceres on a cameo depicting herself and Tiberius, on which she wears the *corona spicea*.⁶¹ As Rose notes, Livia's association with Ceres is more substantially established during the reign of Tiberius, when she was referred to as Ceres Augusta and "the new Demeter" in epigraphy throughout the Roman world from Italy itself to the Far East long before her death.⁶² A priestess of the cult of Livia as Demeter Karpophoros ("Bringer of Fruit") at Ephesus was one of the priests responsible for establishing public paintings of Livia as Demeter Sebastê along with paintings of Artemis and the sons of Drusus the Younger, who were being promoted as the New Dioscuri.⁶³ Ceres, then, is closely tied to the title Augusta as well as the woman. This further emphasis on Livia as Ceres during Tiberius's reign was undoubtedly designed to promote Tiberius' own sacred status, as well as to establish Livia's new public role as the Augusta, and the imperial mother. Maternity had only been one element of Livia's public image under Augustus, and her fertility had not been directly significant to the state until towards the end of Augustus' life, with the adoption of Tiberius. During Tiberius' reign, however, Livia's position as imperial mother meant that any promotion of her maternal virtues and values directly impacted on the public status of her son, the emperor.

⁵⁹ Figure 3, Figure 4.

⁶⁰ Wood, "Mortals, Empresses," p. 81.

⁶¹ Figure 2.

⁶² Spaeth, *Ceres*, pp. 169-170; Wood, *Imperial Women*, pp. 112-113; Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 44-45.

⁶³ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 176; Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p.45.

This connection between the maternity of Livia and the goddess Ceres was also a strong feature of Livia's posthumous and post-consecration imagery. Throughout Claudius's reign, the newly deified Livia appears on official state coins with the attributes of Ceres, an important precedent that was to be emulated by many later Augustae.⁶⁴ The Baiae Antonia, one of the few survivors from a Claudian family set, displays attributes of Korê, which makes it likely that the missing statue of Livia would have been represented as a Ceres Augusta in this group.⁶⁵ If this theory is correct, Livia's role as Ceres would have marked her precedence over the Antonia-figure, hierarchy between these women and their lesser counterparts being a marked attribute of female representation during the reign of Claudius. The close relationship of these women would also have been emphasised by this divine familial link. There is also a suggestion that there was a priesthood of Diva Livia as the new Demeter, and that there was specific reference to this connection in the dedication of the Sebastêion temple at Aphrodisias.⁶⁶ Again, Livia's maternity is the key element to her association with this goddess, and it was a vital element of Claudius' own public image to promote her as his ancestress.

Antonia herself is associated with Ceres through the imagery utilised on the *Constantiae Augusti* coin type, and other official state coins of Claudius's reign portray Antonia with the *corona spicea*.⁶⁷ This may also have been carried on by Eastern mints, as Hahn tentatively identified a coin type from Kaisareia as depicting Antonia Minor in the role of Demeter.⁶⁸ Indeed, the reign of Claudius can be seen as the time in which the association between Ceres and the Augustae was substantially

⁶⁴ *BMC I Claudius* 224-225; Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 172.

⁶⁵ **Figure 11**; Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 169.

⁶⁶ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 167.

⁶⁷ **Figure 13**; *BMC I Claudius* 109-114; Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 88; Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 173.

⁶⁸ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p. 336.

established; not only do Antonia and Livia's posthumous public images at this time reflect this association, but it was during Claudius' reign that Agrippina Minor became the first living woman to wear the corn-ear crown of Ceres on coins of the Roman mint, following in the tradition set by the posthumous depictions of Livia and Antonia.⁶⁹ Hahn has identified a body of coin types from the East which likewise assimilate Agrippina to Demeter.⁷⁰ This suggests that the fertility and abundance that Ceres represents was something that Claudius particularly wanted to promote as an important aspect of his reign. Inscriptions from *Thermae* and *Mytilene* honour Agrippina with the same epithet (*Karpophoros*) which was used to assimilate Livia to Demeter.⁷¹ This assimilation between Agrippina and the goddess of the grain was particularly prevalent in private artworks such as cameos, upon which Agrippina appears as Demeter opposite both Claudius' and Nero's *Triptolemos*.⁷²

The use of Ceres in association with the *Augustae* continued beyond the Julio-Claudian period and into the Flavian and Adoptive eras. While *Augustae* such as Marciana and Matidia who were not imperial wives were also associated with Ceres through statuary or numismatic portraits, it is in association with the imperial wives that Ceres is particularly emphasised as a figure of abundance and fertility.⁷³

Domitia Longina, the only *Augusta* of the Flavian family who was also an imperial wife, is often depicted on Eastern coins with attributes of Demeter (e.g. corn-ears, baskets of fruit, cornucopiae, poppies, a sailing boat, a torch), standing alongside

⁶⁹ **Figure 20**; *BMC I Claudius* 72-76; *RIC I Claudius* 90, 92, 100; Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 290; Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 120.

⁷⁰ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p.351.

⁷¹ *IGR* 4.22, 4.81, 4.100; Wood, "Mortals, Empresses," p. 81; Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p.354.

⁷² Wood, "Mortals, Empresses," p. 82.

⁷³ *BMC III Trajan* 655; Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 178.

Demeter, or as an embodiment of that goddess.⁷⁴ Sabina's posthumous and divine public image also strongly featured Ceres through attributes added to statuary as well as coin reverses.⁷⁵ Inscriptions from Herakleia, Megara, Tchelidjik and Athens honour Sabina as *néa Deméter* ("the new Demeter") and as *Karpophoros* ("the Bearer of Fruit.")⁷⁶ One particularly striking example of Sabina as Ceres was found in the Palaestra of the Baths of Neptune at Ostia.⁷⁷ This expensive life-sized portrait statue of Parian marble depicts Sabina veiled like a priestess and carrying poppies and ears of grain; it is dated to near the end of her lifetime, and may well have been an early posthumous portrait, drawing a connection between Ceres and the newly consecrated Diva Sabina.⁷⁸ While Ceres has been assimilated to both demonstrably fertile and infertile imperial women, it is likely that the emphasis in the case of the childless Sabina was deliberately chosen to place her in a position of symbolic fertility. Sabina was the first imperial wife since Poppaea to have a substantial post-consecration cult, and the choice of Ceres as the main goddess to associate with the portrayal of Diva Sabina may well have been in order to specify that she was intended to be an imperial goddess who represented similar themes and virtues to Ceres. Likewise, the association of Domitia Longina (who had lost her son in infancy) with Ceres served to place her as a figure representing public fertility and abundance, even if she herself was no longer a mother. Just as the Augustae and particularly the imperial wives may have stood as a symbolic figure of female worship and ritual, an association between the Augustae and Ceres may have served to promote them as symbolic figures of the maternity, fertility and abundance of

⁷⁴ Varner, "Domitia Longina," p. 193; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 85.

⁷⁵ *RIC II Hadrian* 1019, 1023; *BMC III Hadrian* 893, 914, 919, 1879-1881, 1900-1901; Smallwood, *Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian*, p. 62; Spaeth, *Ceres*, pp. 178-179; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 135.

⁷⁶ *IGR* 1.785, 3.17; *IG* 3.12, 7.73.; Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 367-368.

⁷⁷ **Figure 48.**

⁷⁸ Boatwright, "Just Window Dressing," p. 68.

Rome itself.

Ceres continued to be associated with the Augustae and imperial wives under the Antonines, particularly on reverse types of Faustina Major.⁷⁹ As with Sabina, the majority of these associations are part of Faustina's posthumous rather than living public image, and contribute to an overall sense of what responsibilities and attributes were expected of this deified Augusta. Her daughter Faustina Minor also had many Ceres reverse types, as did Faustina Minor's daughter Lucilla and daughter-in-law Crispina.⁸⁰ There was a particular emphasis on fertility and maternity in the public images of the Antonine Augustae, particularly with Faustina Minor who was the first imperial wife to bear a surviving male heir. That Ceres is more strongly featured in her mother's coinage than her own supports the idea that the attributes of Ceres were not limited to those Augustae who had abundant fertility, but were intended to support the idea of the Augusta as a symbolic figure of the empire's fortunes and fertility.

Julia Domna has a Ceres-type of statue portraiture, presenting her with the attributes of the goddess. The Julia Domna Ceres in the Capitoline is a modestly draped figure, posed in a similar manner to many previous Augustae, and holding a sheaf of wheat.⁸¹ The statue is veiled, which does not disguise Julia Domna's distinctive hairstyle. Julia Domna also has several Ceres reverse types on the state coinage of the Roman mint as well as the coins of the Eastern mints, including some with the

⁷⁹ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 356-362, 378-379, 403-404, 1084-1085, 1099-1101, 1118-1122, 1128, 1169-1176, 1185-1186; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 327-328, 389-427, 459-465, 1124, 1479, 1509-1518, 1526-1528, 1565-1578, 1588-1589.

⁸⁰ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 493, *M. Aurelius* 668-669, 1619-1624; *BMC IV Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 78-84, 894-896, 966-967, 1558-1562.

⁸¹ **Figure 60.**

legend *Ceres Augusta*.⁸² Spaeth notes the absence of Ceres from the official media of the imperial women after Julia Domna.⁸³ This is largely true, although Julia Mamaea continues the tradition (going back to the time of Agrippina) of being numismatically depicted with grain ears as well as the cornucopia.⁸⁴ It does seem unlikely that the role of the Augusta as a symbol of Rome's fertility and prosperity was waning after Julia Domna's death, considering the powerful presence of the mothers (and grandmother) of Elagabalus and Alexander. All source material as to the public image of the Augustae after Julia Domna is scarce by comparison because she has such a huge extant body of public art and representation, and had a much longer public career than the later Severan Augustae. The use of Ceres in augmenting the sacred and symbolic role of the imperial wife may also be significant; while Julia Domna was a powerful imperial mother, the patterns of her public representation were set during her time as imperial wife, and none of the wives of Elagabalus or Alexander were accorded the same kind of public status during their brief marriages.

Like Vesta, Venus and Ceres, Juno was a goddess commonly used to augment the public image and representation of the Augustae. Juno belonged to the Capitoline triad, and was one of the oldest and most significant goddesses of Rome; she represented women, wives and childbirth as well as the protection of the city.⁸⁵ Like Ceres, Juno was celebrated by women in public street rituals; she is another goddess whose rituals were intimately connected to the matronae.⁸⁶ The essential Roman

⁸² *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 546, 616a-618, 636, 848-850, 870, *Caracalla* 596.

⁸³ Spaeth, *Ceres*, p. 169.

⁸⁴ **Figure 71.**

⁸⁵ Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 15-16; Mueller, "Vita, Pudicitia, Libertas," p. 225.

⁸⁶ Livy 27.37; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, p. 82.

matronal virtue of *pudicitia*, personified as the Roman goddess Pudicitia, was closely intertwined with the public image of Juno.⁸⁷

Given the assimilation between Augustus and Jupiter, it is perhaps surprising that Juno does not figure more closely in the goddess-imagery surrounding the public image of Livia. Indeed, the only associations between Livia and Juno are scarce and entirely informal.⁸⁸ This may be an attempt to play down the single scandalous event which marred Livia's reputation for modesty: the decadent wedding/betrothal party in which she and Augustus reportedly dressed up as Jove and Juno amid debauched revelries. However, it is most likely that Augustus and Livia were keen to avoid any association with the most prominent aspect of that goddess, Juno Regina, because any allusion to queenship would inevitably raise the uncomfortable subject of Augustus's resemblance to a king. While Jupiter was undoubtedly the king of the gods in the Roman mind, the word *rex* did not figure in his official titles as *regina* did for Juno.

In any case, Juno barely figures at all in the public image of the imperial women until the Flavians, which may either be for similar reasons to Juno's omission from Livia's public image, or because Livia's public image (and the choice of goddesses associated with her) was emulated by her immediate successors to the title Augusta.⁸⁹ One exception to this is the Juno Ludovisi statue, which Rumpf identified as a

⁸⁷ Mueller, "Vita, Pudicitia, Libertas," pp. 225-227.

⁸⁸ This includes evidence of Livia being worshipped as an aspect of Juno in Carthage and Africa, Pergamene coins representing Livia as Hera and a number of glass flasks identified as being portraits of Livia, possibly as a personification of Hera. Grether, "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult," pp. 225-228; Winkes, "Livia - Portrait and Propaganda," pp. 33-4; Barrett, *Livia*, p. 263.

⁸⁹ A rare exception to this is a reference in the *Consolatio ad Liviam* to Antonia, widow of the departed Drusus, as being Juno to his Jove, though this is more likely to be a literary convention than an overt political statement. *Cons. Liv.* 299-342.

portrait of Antonia, while a more recent catalogue study by Winkes re-identifies the subject of the Juno as Livia; scholarship remains divided as to whether either of these identifications are accurate, or indeed whether the Juno represented any of the Julio-Claudian imperial women at all.⁹⁰ There is a notable similarity, however, between the side view of the Juno Ludovisi and the Tiberian “Augusta” coins, particularly the Iustitia and Pietas portraits.⁹¹

Domitia Longina was the first Augusta to feature Juno as an important aspect of her personal public image. She is referred to as Juno Romana in the poetry of Statius (with Domitian as Jupiter), as assimilation which Varner argues is an indication of an important theme in Domitian-Domitia propaganda.⁹² A miniature portrait in the British Museum captures Domitia as Juno, and may have been originally paired with a similar likeness of Domitian as Jupiter; he certainly appeared in many examples of statuary with attributes of Jove.⁹³ More significantly, Domitia is associated with Juno’s peacock, the symbol of concord within marriage, on the reverse types of her coinage; an almost-identical reverse type with the legend *Concordia Augusta* as well as the peacock is also used for coins celebrating Julia Titi during her lifetime.⁹⁴ An earlier example of the use of this particular reverse type during the Flavian period comes from the reign of Titus, in which a *Concordia Augusta* reverse type with peacock appears on the reverse of a coin commemorating Diva Domitilla.⁹⁵

This strong association between Domitia and Juno shows the changes that have occurred in the imperial family under the Flavians: considering that Domitian styled

⁹⁰ Rumpf, “Antonia Augusta,” pp. 25-33; Winkes, *Livia, Octavia, Julia*, p. 163 Cat 86.

⁹¹ **Figure 9, Figure 10.**

⁹² Stat. *Silv.* 4.18; Varner, “Domitia Longina,” pp. 201-202.

⁹³ Varner, “Domitia Longina,” p. 202.

⁹⁴ *BMC II Domitian* 60-1 249; *RIC II Domitian* 212, 215, 217; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 85; Varner, “Domitia Longina,” pp. 201-202.

⁹⁵ *RIC II Titus* 70; *BMC II Titus* 136.

himself *dominus et deus*, it is hardly surprising that the Flavians were less cautious about associating the wife (or daughter) of the emperor with a goddess who is also a queen than were the Julio-Claudians. As will be demonstrated, Juno's (and in particular, Juno Regina's) continuing representation in the public imagery of the Augustae was predominant only in relation to those Augustae who were also imperial wives.

Domitia set an important precedent for the wife of the emperor to hold an intrinsic "queenly" status, and yet later imperial wives did not necessarily continue in this tradition. The reputation and public image of Plotina, for instance, paired as it was with that of Marciana and later Matidia, firmly rejected the idea that the imperial wife had a separate and higher status than other imperial women.⁹⁶ However, Sabina's public image as imperial wife, once she belatedly received the title of Augusta, had far more in common with that of Domitia than that of her Trajanic counterparts. Correspondingly, it is Sabina who is associated with Juno Regina through reverse types.⁹⁷ An inscription from Philippi also describes Sabina as *Iunoni Coniugali Sabinae*, portraying her as the ultimate female patron of marriage.⁹⁸ This development could be read as a change in policy on female modesty from Trajan's reign to that of Hadrian, but the lack of public honours for Sabina during the first few decades of their marriage does not necessarily support this. Instead, the sudden lavish promotion of Sabina's public image as imperial wife that can be seen when she receives the title of Augusta may signify a change in Hadrian's own perspective as to the usefulness of a female figure in the imperial family. The new promotion of

⁹⁶ See pages 55-58 of this thesis.

⁹⁷ *BMC III Hadrian* 908-910, 936-943, 1869, 1894-1895; *RIC II Hadrian* 394-395, 401-404, 1022, 1028, 1038.

⁹⁸ Cresswell, *Augusta*, p. 137.

Sabina as a “queenly” presence in Hadrian’s imperial family, Juno to his Jove, seems designed to present her as a figure of high feminine status, worthy of being the honorary mother of a future imperial heir.

The Juno-Jove representation of the imperial couple is used again with Faustina Major who is portrayed as Juno to Antoninus Pius’ Jupiter in the artistic rendition of their mutual apotheosis on the base of the Column of Antoninus Pius.⁹⁹ This association is followed up with references to various aspects of Juno on Faustina Major’s coinage including Juno Regina and Juno Lucina; as was seen with Venus, the Antonine period is notable for the usage of a variety of aspects of a “patron” goddess in association with the imperial women, rather than a single prominent aspect.¹⁰⁰ The introduction of Juno Lucina, patron of childbirth, is also significant here because the reign of Antoninus Pius marked a new era of fertile and maternal Augustae, starting with Faustina Major. Juno’s peacock also appears on many of Faustina Major’s *diva* coin issues.¹⁰¹

Faustina Minor’s public image also makes great use of Juno in various aspects. During her father’s reign, however, her coin reverses refer mostly to Juno Lucina, while those during her husband Marcus Aurelius’ reign include many references to Juno Regina.¹⁰² This is further evidence that Juno Regina’s “queenly” status made her a figure who was only appropriate to be associated with the Augustae who were

⁹⁹ **Figure 49**; Kleiner, D.E.E. (1987) “Women and Family Life on Funerary Altars,” [*Latomus* 46, pp. 545-554] p. 546.

¹⁰⁰ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 331-332, 338-341, 344, 363-365, 391, 404c, 1077-1080, 1090-1094, 1102, 1143-1144, 1155, 1177, 1190; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 43-45, 136-145, 1116-1119, 1128-1130, 1480-1481, 1531-1535, 1540-1543, 1579, 1596-1598.

¹⁰¹ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 384-386, 407.

¹⁰² *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 1377, 1398-1400, *M. Aurelius* 687-698, 1645-1652; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 1043-1045, 2153-2154, 2188, *Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 104-124, 146, 914-923, 983-986.

also imperial wives. A separate, specific status for imperial wives was certainly being established at this time. The importance of Juno Lucina to Faustina Minor's "daughter" coinage further demonstrates the emphasis on Faustina's fertility and maternity throughout her public life as the Augusta. An inscription asking Juno Lucina for the protection of the Domus Augusta specifically refers to Faustina and Lucilla as well as their respective husbands.¹⁰³ As with Ceres, this shows that in some religious matters, particularly those concerning the goddesses associated with the *matronae*, it was in the emperor's interest to present his wife in the role of religious supplicant.

Lucilla has Juno coin reverses heralding both the *Regina* and *Lucina* aspects as well as Juno without epithet.¹⁰⁴ As Mattingly notes, however, Lucilla's Juno Regina coins belong only to the period of her marriage to Lucius Verus (her father's co-emperor), after which this aspect of the goddess is noticeably absent from Lucilla's coinage.¹⁰⁵ Again, this is evidence of a clear distinction between a divine association that is appropriate for the Augustae in general, and that which is only appropriate for the imperial wife. Crispina, who like Faustina Major was imperial wife for her entire time as Augusta, also has Juno reverse types, including Juno Lucina and Juno Regina.¹⁰⁶ This restriction of Juno Regina to the Augustae who were also imperial wives is further supported by the coinage of Manlia Scantilla, wife of Didius Julianus, amongst whose very small body of extant coins are included several Juno Regina coin reverses.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ *CIL* 6.1.360.

¹⁰⁴ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 770-721, 744-752; *BMC IV Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 313-315, 339-345, 1152-1160, 1204-1208, 1218-1221.

¹⁰⁵ Mattingly, *BMC IV*, cxxxiv.

¹⁰⁶ *RIC III Commodus* 283-284, 679-682; *BMC IV Commodus* 41-42, 431-434.

¹⁰⁷ *RIC IV Didius Julianus* 7a-7b, 18a-19b; *BMC V Didius Julianus* 10-12, 32-37.

This use of Juno Regina marks an overt change in the public representation of the Augusta under the Antonines, with a clear distinction being made between those Augustae who were imperial wives and those who were not. This distinction was to reach a climax with Julia Domna under the Severans. As with Faustina Minor and the other Antonine imperial wives, Julia Domna's public image heavily utilised both key aspects of Juno: *Regina* the queen and *Lucina*, patron of childbirth and maternity.¹⁰⁸ Like Faustina Minor, Julia Domna was able to claim great status through her successful fertility (as the mother of two sons) as well as being a "queenly" figure in the imperial family, Juno to her husband's Jove. Severus and Julia Domna are often represented as Jupiter and Juno, in public art and private inscriptions.¹⁰⁹ Under Caracalla's reign, with Julia Domna's public role changing from imperial wife to imperial mother, there is a noticeable absence of coin reverses dedicated to Juno Regina; instead, an aspect of Juno not previously seen on the coinage of the Augustae, Juno Conservatrix, appears in Julia Domna reverse type.¹¹⁰ Juno Conservatrix symbolises Juno's role as protector of the city, harking back to the days of the war against Hannibal and Juno's origins as a goddess in Rome. Her association here with Julia Domna as imperial mother suggests that the role of imperial mother is tied to that of the divine female protector of the city; given Julia Domna's known sacerdotal practice and her role as "leader" or patron of the *matronae* of Rome, this suggests either a real or honorary responsibility for the safety of the city, possibly through ritual to Juno Conservatrix. The changing status of Julia Domna represents the last time in pre-Christian Rome that the imperial wife

¹⁰⁸ *RIC IV* 559-560, 640, 648a, 840, 845, 856-857, 878; *BMC V Wars of the Succession* 487, 496-497, *Septimius & Caracalla* 37-44, 601-603, 769-771.

¹⁰⁹ Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 340-342.

¹¹⁰ *RIC IV Caracalla* 376-378, 584-586, 598-599; *BMC V Caracalla* 206-212.

is seen to enjoy a special status above that of other imperial women; under Elagabalus and Alexander there is a strong move towards the importance of the imperial mother at the expense of the imperial wife. It may be significant therefore that Juno Regina does not feature on the extant coinage devoted to the wives of Elagabalus and Alexander, while Elagabalus' mother and grandmother Julia Soaemias and Julia Maesa do have Juno Regina coin reverses.¹¹¹ This gives added support to the theory that the imperial mother had eclipsed the imperial wife at this time, the maternal Augusta being honoured with the higher, "special" status of being queen to her son's king.

Overall, then, Juno had a substantial role in the public representation of the Augustae, despite the early reluctance of the Julio-Claudians to utilise her image. The queenly associations of Juno Regina, which would have seemed so dangerous under Augustus and his immediate successors, were to become the most salient feature of Juno's association with the Augustae and, in particular, the imperial wife, during the later dynasties where the concept of kingship held less problematic associations. The popular use of Jupiter in conjunction with the emperor's public image undoubtedly had a strong influence on Juno's own representation among the imperial wives, and the ongoing portrayal of the imperial couple as Jove and Juno would have continued to associate Juno with the imperial wife and Augusta in the minds of the populace. The seemingly anomalous numismatic evidence connecting Elagabalus' mother and grandmother with Juno Regina is symptomatic of a change in the public representation of the Augustae, in which the imperial mother briefly eclipsed the imperial wife (and potential mother of heirs) in "queenly" status.

¹¹¹ *RIC IV Elagabalus* 235-237, 253-260, 412; *BMC V Elagabalus* 38-43, 66-68, 296-297.

Another reference to uxorial virtues and ideals in the iconography of the Augustae comes from the regular appearance in their propaganda of Concordia. The personification of Concordia was popular during the Republic, usually in the context of senatorial concord; under the principate, however, the use of Concordia in imperial propaganda came to refer either to the concord of partnership between the emperor and his allies, or to the familial concord between the emperor and members of his family, often his wife.¹¹² As the personification of marital concord, Concordia becomes particularly significant to the public image of the Augustae.

Livia's patronage of the temple of Concordia, mentioned earlier in this chapter, had the powerful effect of associating her with that goddess. Eumachia of Pompeii, a public priestess of Venus Pompeiana, acknowledged this association when she established a portico based on the Porticus Liviae in her own city: she dedicated the structure jointly to Concordia and Pietas, but placed Livia's portrait centrally in the portico, the architecture of which made various stylistic allusions to Augustan monuments such as the Forum of Augustus and the Ara Pacis.¹¹³ Concordia provided Livia with the benefit of a divine patron of marriage who had none of the "queenly" implications of Juno. Other Julio-Claudian Augustae were similarly associated with the concept of marital concord, if not the goddess herself: the Nero-Poppaea *Augustus Augusta* coin, for instance, features Poppaea carrying a cornucopia.¹¹⁴ This symbol, combined with the overall harmonious message of the coin, invokes the concept of *concordia* if not the actual divine figure. Levick proposes that Nero's *Concordia Augusta* reverses (the first time this phrase is used

¹¹² Levick, "Concordia at Rome," pp. 226-227.

¹¹³ Kleiner, "Imperial Women as Patrons," p. 33.

¹¹⁴ **Figure 23.**

upon the coinage) refer to his marriage to Poppaea, which is likely considering the dating and the fact that Poppaea is the only one of Nero's wives whom we know to have been made an Augusta.¹¹⁵ However, Levick dismisses the significance of this coin issue as being merely "domestic," in light of Poppaea's lack of overt political power.¹¹⁶ This approach fails to recognise the symbolic importance of Poppaea as well as other imperial women; if Nero was really alluding to the harmony of his marriage in these coin reverses, then it is significant that he felt the need to make such a public statement. The *Concordia Augusta* reverses of Nero are significant because they represent part of a larger campaign to promote Poppaea as the mother of his future heirs. Given that Poppaea is the first non-Julian imperial wife to receive distinct public honours, any aspect of her public image must be considered to have political as well as "domestic" implications.

Under the Flavians, with the release of so many coins actively promoting the Augustae in association with goddess-figures, *Concordia Augusta* is firmly established as a figure of significance to the Augustae. The *Concordia Augusta* reverse type of Diva Domitilla Augusta depicts a peacock, and emphasises the marital theme implied by *concordia* by associating Concordia with the symbol of Juno.¹¹⁷ While this theme of marital concord is designed to place Diva Domitilla as a worthy partner for Vespasian, it is primarily designed to promote their son Titus' public image as a pious son as well as a son born of a harmonious marriage. This is also a key piece of evidence (however circumstantial) to support the theory that Diva Domitilla was the wife rather than daughter of Vespasian; it was rare for a woman to be publicly celebrated as a wife if her husband is not politically relevant. While

¹¹⁵ Levick, "Concordia at Rome," p. 227.

¹¹⁶ Levick, "Concordia at Rome," p. 227.

¹¹⁷ *BMC II Titus* 136; *RIC II Titus* 70; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 47.

Concordia Augusta had appeared previously as a legend on Nero's coinage, it was the Flavians who appropriated her as a specifically Augustan aspect of the goddess Concordia (as they also did with Venus Augusta), distinguishing her from her Republican counterpart in order to promote the value of *concordia* in relation to the public images of Julia Titi and Domitia as well as Domitilla.¹¹⁸ Inscriptions from the East name Domitia as both thea Homonoia (Concordia) and Homonoia Sebasté.¹¹⁹ During the reign of Hadrian, Sabina's coinage likewise made use of the Flavian Concordia Augusta, showing further evidence that Sabina's public image as imperial wife was influenced more greatly by that of Domitia Longina than her own immediate predecessor Plotina.¹²⁰

It is under the Antonines that Concordia becomes a major influence on imperial familial propaganda, and on the public image of the Augusta. This may be because of the strong emphasis on family throughout this dynasty, and the renewed importance of imperial women as dynastic vessels after the "adoptive era" in which imperial wives could only stand as honorary mothers of heirs. The public image of Faustina Major, Faustina Minor, Lucilla and Crispina relies heavily on their roles as wives, and the appearance of concord in their marriages. As the discussion of Juno Regina revealed, this period was notable for a shift in the role of the imperial wife. In particular, we see the imperial couple being used as a symbol of marital harmony, their concord seemingly representing the political and matrimonial concord of the state. As well as appearing in the guise of Concordia in public statuary, Faustina Major also has a large number of Concordia reverse types on her coinage; several of

¹¹⁸ *RIC II Titus* 178-179, *Domitian* 212, 215, 217; *BMC II Domitian* 60-61, 249-250; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 85-86; Varner, "Domitia Longina," p. 194.

¹¹⁹ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p. 243, p. 361.

¹²⁰ *RIC II Hadrian* 390-393, 398-400, 414, 1017-1018 1021, 1025-1026, 1037, 1047; *BMC III Hadrian* 894-907, 928-935, 1861-1868, 1887-1893.

these reverses depict Faustina and Antoninus as a couple, instead of the more common depiction of Concordia as a goddess.¹²¹ The presentation of the Augustus and Augusta as a married couple on the coinage had only appeared briefly in previous eras, as with the *Augustus-Augusta* coin celebrating Nero and Poppaea; under the Antonines, the numismatic image of the emperor and his wife as a married couple became far more common.¹²² The practice whereby newly married couples were to sacrifice in the presence of statues of the *princeps* and his wife is commemorated on a *Concordiae* sestertius of Antoninus Pius, which clearly depicts two grand statues of Antoninus and Faustina Major joining hands (the traditional pose symbolising concord) with a smaller, mortal couple below echoing the gesture.¹²³ Mattingly and Sydenham identify this mortal couple as Marcus Aurelius and Faustina Minor, and suggest that this coin was struck to commemorate their betrothal, despite the fact that it was struck a long time after the formal ceremony.¹²⁴ A *Vota Publica* reverse type of a *Diva Augusta Faustina* coin depicts Marcus Aurelius and Faustina Minor standing with clasped hands, with Concordia standing behind them both.¹²⁵ The repetition of this numismatic image of Antoninus and Faustina Major and, later, Marcus Aurelius and Faustina Minor as symbolic figures representing the concord of marriage shows that the domestic roles of both Augustus and Augusta were essential to their public image.

The goddess Concordia was also of particular significance to the Antonine Augustae, because of the important role of daughters: both Faustina Minor and Lucilla were

¹²¹ **Figure 50**; *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 327-330, 335-337, 380-381b, 1074-1076, 1086-1089, 1129, 1184; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 36, 38-42, 132-135, 298-300, 466, 1114-1115, 1125-1127.

¹²² **Figure 23**.

¹²³ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 601.

¹²⁴ Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC III*, p. 8.

¹²⁵ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 402, 434, 441, 1253, 1269; this same reverse type is used for coins celebrating Marcus Aurelius throughout the reign of Antoninus Pius.

married to men who were named their father's heirs, and served for a time as co-emperors. In both these instances, Concordia had a double meaning: the harmonious concord between husband and wife, and the political concord between father and son-in-law. It is hardly surprising, then, that the goddess Concordia appeared on so many reverse types of the coinage of Faustina Minor as well as Lucilla.¹²⁶

The public representation of the Augustus and his wife as symbolic figures of marriage was continued into the Severan dynasty. Indeed, Dio reports that Septimius Severus claimed that on the night before his wedding to Julia Domna, he dreamed that Faustina Minor was preparing the marriage chamber for them in the temple of Venus and Roma; it was in this same temple, built by Hadrian, that silver statues of Faustina Minor and Marcus Aurelius had been placed so that couples about to be married could make offerings at an altar erected there.¹²⁷ The purpose of this "omen" was clearly to retrospectively provide the blessing of Septimius and Julia's predecessors for their marriage, and thus for their new role as emperor and imperial wife. The reference to Faustina Minor in this story confirms her sacred status as a patroness of marriage, and thus implies that Julia Domna has inherited that sacred status.

Indeed, the importance of the appearance of marital and family concord was vital to the public image of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna, as is evident by the sheer wealth of images which depict them together as an imperial couple: far more so than any previous Augustus and Augusta. They appear together on the coinage,

¹²⁶ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 496-503, 1368, 1372-1374c, 1390, 1392, *Marcus Aurelius* 670-672, 755-761, 1625-1627, 1730-1733; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 1041-1042, 1078-1081, 1084-1090, 2166-2167, 2173-2176, 2198-2199, 2203-2204, *Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 85, 303-307, 332-335, 968-971, 1140-1142, 1182, 1214.

¹²⁷ Dio 72.31.1, 75.3.1.

Septimius radiate and Julia Domna diademed, with the legend *Concordiae Aeternae* on the reverses of coins that variously honour Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta on their obverses.¹²⁸ The effect of this is to present the first Severan imperial couple as semi-divine beings who symbolise the concept of marital concord. These coins were first released after Caracalla was raised to the rank of Augustus in 198 CE and began sharing in his father's imperial duties, suggesting that at the promotion of Septimius and Julia as such a vital example of concord was at least partly intended to augment Caracalla's status as the son of that union, and the next *princeps*.¹²⁹ As with the Antonines, it was of great benefit to the Severan imperial couple to be associated with Concordia, with the implications of political as well as marital concord. As well as promoting the idea of stability and the assured succession, the emphasis on Concordia was part of a larger programme implying a close relationship between the Antonines and the Severans; in particular, presenting Septimius Severus as the "heir" of Marcus Aurelius, and Julia Domna as the worthy successor of Faustina Minor.

The importance of Concordia in the representation of the imperial couple continued with Caracalla and Plautilla. The public image of this second Severan imperial couple was evidently influenced by the representation of Septimius and Julia. Plautilla has a predominance of Concordia reverses in her extant body of coinage.¹³⁰ A *Concordiae Aeternae* reverse type, which also appears on Caracalla's own coinage, depicts Plautilla and Caracalla clasping hands in the traditional pose of marital harmony. This same image of Plautilla and Caracalla clasping hands appears on the reverse of a Plautilla Augusta denarius and sestertius type under the legend

¹²⁸ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 522, *Caracalla* 36, 52, 59a-59c, 125 a-125b, *Geta* 7a-7b; *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 275.

¹²⁹ Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC II*, p. 114, *Vol IV* p. 75.

¹³⁰ *RIC IV Caracalla* 60, 359-361, 363-365, 370, 372, 580; *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 398-404, 411-419.

Propago Imperi; again, this reverse type appears on Caracalla's own coinage.¹³¹

While the emphasis on concord between Caracalla and Plautilla was evidently drawing on imagery used by Septimius Severus and Julia Domna as well as the Antonine imperial wives, it may also have been a specific propaganda element chosen to represent the alliance between Plautilla's father Plautianus and Septimius Severus.¹³² The marriage was designed to bring Plautianus more closely into the imperial family, which gives a political as well as domestic dimension to Plautilla's Concordia types.

The representation of the Augustus and Augusta in a formal marital pose on coins with the legend *Concordia* was a continuing tradition under Elagabalus, who appeared thus with each of his three wives.¹³³ Alexander and Orbiana also appear thus on a variety of examples of the state coinage. The importance of the Augustus and his wife as a public symbol of marital concord was thus carried right through the Severan dynasty, building on the notion that the imperial wife was an integral figure to the overall public image of the emperor, even at a time when the imperial mothers had far more influence and public status than the imperial wives.

The representation of Concordia in association with the Augustae generally has domestic rather than overtly political implications; in the case of marriages that also formed political alliances, however, the appearance of Concordia would have a dual significance. The presentation of the emperor and imperial wife as a couple whose harmonious relationship has a symbolic resonance can be dated back to the public

¹³¹ *RIC IV Caracalla* 67, 362, 578a; *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 405-410.

¹³² See page 75 of this thesis.

¹³³ *RIC IV Elagabalus* 210-216, 225-228, 232-233, 386-387, 389-395, 399; *BMC V Elagabalus* 171-176, 184-187, 316-322, 335-337.

image of Augustus and Livia, and becomes especially significant under the Antonines and Severans. Just as the chastity of the Vestal Virgins and the virtuous behaviour of the imperial wife can be seen to represent the fortunes of the state, so the concord of the imperial couple can also be seen to represent the concord, both domestic and political, of the state. The emphasis on Concordia in conjunction with imperial marriages also strongly suggests that the idea of a harmonious marriage reflects positively on the public status of the children (and particularly sons) of that marriage.

The representation of Vesta, Venus, Ceres, Juno, and Concordia as part of the public image of the Augustae forms a cohesive picture of the intended perception of the role of the Augusta. The vital themes of fertility and domesticity are reiterated over and over again by associating the Augustae with these specific goddesses and their attributes. Above all, there is an undoubted Romanness in these five goddesses who form such a substantial part of the public image of the Augustae. Other, less definitively Roman goddesses also formed a small part of the public image of many Augustae, though their foreign origins necessarily limited their usefulness in this regard.

Cybele, for example, stands out as an overtly foreign goddess even after her adoption and re-invention as the Roman Magna Mater. Originally a Phrygian goddess, Cybele represented a certain wildness and decadence that was not generally desired in Roman women.¹³⁴ Indeed, as the Magna Mater, she was associated with Roman generals and emperors long before she was associated with imperial women,

¹³⁴ Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 97-98.

representing protection against foreign enemies.¹³⁵ Her connections with militaristic themes date back to the Punic Wars, and her priestess is depicted with Augustus and his grandson Gaius on a relief sculpture from an altar dedicated near the Forum of Augustus.¹³⁶ While both Livia and Agrippina Minor appear on cameos wearing the turret crown of Cybele, there is little other reference to this goddess in conjunction with the imperial women or Augustae for the first century of the principate.¹³⁷ While this did not prevent Augustus from using her to support his own propaganda and that of his family, she was not one of the goddesses he selected to be associated with the imperial women; indeed, there continues to be little reference to Cybele in connection with the Augustae for several dynasties. A rare exception to this is a provincial coin from Acmonia which presented Poppaea Sebaste's bust with a lion appearing over her shoulder and ears of corn bound into her hair.¹³⁸ Cybele does not, however, appear on official coins of the Roman mint.

Under the Antonines, however, the Magna Mater becomes established as an imperial favourite, and she forms an integral part of the worship of the deified Faustina Major.¹³⁹ It is clear that the wildness and foreignness associated with Cybele was less problematic to this later dynasty, perhaps because the Antonines felt less of a need to publicly present an image of familial modesty, or because Antoninus himself was particularly fond of this goddess and the combination of military success and motherhood that she represented. The Magna Mater reverse types of Faustina Major do not refer to Cybele's Phrygian or Roman name: she appears under the legends of

¹³⁵ Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 96-97.

¹³⁶ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 105.

¹³⁷ **Figure 7, Figure 19.**

¹³⁸ Head, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins*, Acmonia 47.

¹³⁹ Grant, *The Antonines*, p. 16.

Augusta and *S.C.* and perhaps more significantly, as *Matri Deum*.¹⁴⁰ It is this maternal aspect of Cybele/Magna Mater that renders her relevant to the Antonine Augustae, and it is this rather than any military associations of this goddess that is key to her appearance on these coins. Indeed, the maternal connotations of the Magna Mater may be the primary reason why she was chosen to be a part of Faustina Major's posthumous public image. Faustina Minor and her daughter Lucilla both also have reverse types that depict Cybele under the legend of her more traditional Roman title, *Mater Magna*.¹⁴¹ The role of the Magna Mater as a maternal figure representing military success can be seen as relevant to Faustina Minor's new title of *Mater Castrorum*, and to the public representation of Faustina herself who was well known to have followed her husband on campaign.

The Roman, maternal aspect of Cybele as Magna Mater continues its significance in the Augusta's public image under the Severans and Julia Domna. Julia Domna has *Mater Deum* Cybele reverse types that echo those of Faustina Major as well as *Mater Magna* reverse types similar to those associated with Faustina Minor and Lucilla.¹⁴² While the extensive use of Cybele in Julia Domna's public image can be seen as another example of her borrowing imagery from the Antonine women, she took it one step further by actively assimilating herself to Cybele on her coinage.¹⁴³ Lusnia argues that the link made here between Julia Domna and the Mater Magna implies that the mother of the Augusti is also the mother of gods.¹⁴⁴ This would suggest that this goddess had been chosen to promote Julia Domna's public image as a mother, so

¹⁴⁰ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 1114, 1123, 1145, 1150, 1167; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 1436-1441.

¹⁴¹ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 704-706, 1663-1664, 1753-1754; *BMC IV Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 132-135, 836, 932-935.

¹⁴² *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 564-566, 570, 841, 859, 861, 882-883, *Caracalla* 382-383a; *BMC V Septimius and Caracalla* 49-55.

¹⁴³ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 562, 858, 879; *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 47-48.

¹⁴⁴ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," pp. 132-133.

that the glory reflected upon her would augment the public image of her sons.

Isis, the Egyptian queen of the gods, is another example of a foreign goddess who was largely excluded from association with the Augustae until the Antonine and Severan eras, in which she was added to the group of goddesses who served to promote the Augustae in their roles as wives and mothers. Cleopatra used Isis heavily in her public image, and this is believed to be the primary reason that Augustus and Tiberius both banished the worship of Isis (as well as other Egyptian gods) within Rome.¹⁴⁵ Isis was later integrated into the official religious landscape of Rome, and a sanctuary was built in her honour on the Campus Martius.¹⁴⁶ Apart from her foreign image and her association with Cleopatra, Isis might have been an ideal goddess to have been assimilated into the public image of the women of the imperial family. She was very much a goddess of women, and embodied many of the elements that made Juno popular: queenship combined with marital virtue and motherhood. Once again, however, the propaganda from the reign of Augustus relating to imperial women had a strong effect on the continuing public image of the Augustae for more than a century after Augustus' death. It is not until the Antonines that Isis first appears in conjunction with the Augustae, and then only fleetingly. Faustina Major has a single extant Isis reverse type among her *diva* coinage, and Faustina Minor has two Isis reverse types among her Augusta coinage; these are marked as uncertain and hybrids because of their unusual nature, and none of them refer to Isis herself in the legend, though identification is not controversial due to specific attributes such as the lotus.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Dio 53.2.4, 54.6.6; Suet. *Tib.* 36; Jos. *J.A.* 18.4.

¹⁴⁶ Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 250-251.

¹⁴⁷ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 1197, *M. Aurelius* 1725-1726.

By the time of the Severan dynasty, Isis is more openly referred to within imperial propaganda and is even called upon to protect the imperial family during the reign of Septimius Severus, in an inscription that allows Julia Domna the same number of lines for her official titles as that of her husband and son.¹⁴⁸ A Julia Domna reverse type depicts Isis in her role as mother, holding her son Horus beneath the inscription *Saeculi Felicitas*.¹⁴⁹ This is further evidence of the substantial change in attitude about which divine associations were appropriate for the Augustae. The appearance of Isis in connection to the public image of Julia Domna demonstrates the new approach that the Severans in particular brought to the imperial family: a wider definition of what it was to be Roman, and a less cautious attitude towards incorporating elements of “alien” culture into the Roman sphere.

It is also worth considering the Diana and Minerva, the two most prominent Roman goddesses who do not substantially feature in the public propaganda of the Augustae. Both had closer associations with the men of the imperial family than the women. Indeed, the most significant imperial figure associated with Diana is Antinous, the lover of Hadrian, who was posthumously worshipped alongside Diana.¹⁵⁰ Likewise, Minerva is represented on reverse types for emperors such as Claudius, Galba, Domitian (who adopted Minerva as his particular patron), Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, Septimius Severus, Geta and Caracalla but almost never appears on reverse types for the imperial women.¹⁵¹ Like Cybele, the militaristic elements of Minerva’s reputation made her of greater relevance as a

¹⁴⁸ *CIL* 6.1.354.

¹⁴⁹ *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 577, 865.

¹⁵⁰ Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 272-273.

¹⁵¹ See for example *RIC I Claudius* 65-66, *Galba* 153; *RIC II Domitian* 10-10a, 11-12, 22-23, 30-31, 33-39, 45-48a, 52-56, *Hadrian* 330-331; *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 1312-1318, *M. Aurelius* 386-387, *Commodus* 425, 428; *RIC IV Septimius Severus* 206, *Caracalla* 265, *Geta* 45-47; Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC IV*, p. 79.

patron to imperial men than women; on the other hand, the majority of goddesses who appear on coin reverses are usually employed in the public image of imperial men as well, so the popularity of Minerva as a patron goddess of the Augusti and Caesars did not preclude her from being used in Augusta imagery. The popularity of Venus Victrix and Venus Augusta among the Augustae may have made any substantial use of Minerva unnecessary; but this is not enough to explain her absence from the iconography of the Augustae. Indeed, it is the virginity of these goddesses that seems most likely to be responsible for their limited reference within the propaganda of the Augustae; or, to be more specific, their lack of association with women as mothers or wives. While Vesta's virginity (and, specifically, that of her priestesses) was specifically tied to the maternal and domestic duties of the matronae of Rome, there is no suggestion in the sources that the virginity of Minerva and Diana was similarly associated with marital chastity or the fertility of the city. The barren virginity of Minerva and Diana rendered them irrelevant to the promotion of the Augusta as a wife and mother, and thus irrelevant to the promotion of the Augustae at all.

Overall, the evidence of divine patronage and iconography continues to support the idea that maternity and wifely virtue were vital to the public image of the Augusta. Not all Augustae were mothers or even married (though most were) but whether actual, potential or honorary, their dynastic role was particularly relevant to their public representation. Maternity, fertility and wifely virtue influences all elements of that public representation, including the goddesses chosen to support their public image and sacred status. In particular, the celebration of the fertility of the Augusta (whether that fertility was real, potential or honorary) stands out as the prevailing

theme of the goddesses and religious iconography selected to **augment** their public image.

Chapter Five: Sacred Status and the Augusta.

Through sacerdotal practice as well as religious iconography and the sacred connotations of his name itself, Augustus and his successors had a powerful sacred status. Just as the deification of his adoptive father Julius Caesar substantially augmented Augustus' sacred status, so too did Augustus' own consecration augment the sacred status of his successors.¹ The Augustae, from Livia onwards, were imbued with a similar sacred status, though the intentions and effects of this status were noticeably different from those of the Augustus. While the sacred status of the Augustus was designed to augment his political power and overwhelming authority, the sacred status of the Augusta was designed to support her integral role as mother and potential mother of the Augusti and the Caesars.

Sacred status was integral to the public image of the Augusta. This is primarily evident through the actual religious roles and responsibilities that were granted to certain Augustae as well as the sacred myths that were associated with them, and is further supported by the actual consecration of at least twelve of the first 28 women who were Augustae. Each of these elements promoted the sacred status of the Augusta, and imbued the title itself with further sacred connotations. By the end of the reign of the Julio-Claudians, the barely-established title of Augusta was already strongly tied to sacerdotal practice as well as the possibility that a beloved female relative of the emperor could be consecrated as a goddess. The succeeding dynasties

¹ Dio 51.20.6; Suet. *Div. Jul.* 88, *Aug.* 100.3-100.4; Hammond, *The Augustan Principate*, p. 108; Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, pp. 336-337.

confirmed and established these sacred associations with the title *Augusta*, making the title itself a weightier and more powerful honour as time went on.

There is not enough evidence to ascertain whether every living *Augusta* held a sacerdotal position during her lifetime, or took on specific religious responsibility in other ways (such as the patronage of temples). The evidence we do have, however, clearly presents the first three *Augustae* in strong sacerdotal roles, and later evidence suggests that this tradition was ongoing, or at least recurring, in later years. Other elements that contributed to building up a sacred status around the living *Augusta* included religious festivals held in their honour, and a tradition of augury myths that presented various *Augustae* in the role of prophetess. As with the previously discussed themes of domestic and maternal virtue, the primary role of the public representation of the living *Augusta* as a sacred figure was to support the sacred status of her emperor, and in particular the sacred status of her sons.

Augustan propaganda provided the new *princeps* (and indeed, the principate itself) with a powerful sacred status. Suetonius tells us that Augustus chose his name specifically to evoke religious connotations:

...cum quibusdam censentibus Romulum appellari oportere quasi et ipsum conditorem urbis, praevaluisset, ut Augustus potius vocaretur, non tantum novo sed etiam ampliore cognomine, quod loca quoque religiosa et in quibus augurato quid consecratur augusta dicantur, ab auctu vel ab avium gestu gustave, sicut etiam Ennius docet scribens: Augusto augurio postquam incluta condita Roma est.²

² Suet. *Aug.* 7.2.

For when some proposed to give him the name of Romulus as a second founder of the city, it was resolved that he preferred the name Augustus, because it was more distinguished, because sacred places and those items consecrated in observance of auguries are also called *august* from the augmentation in dignity or from the movements and feeding of birds, as taught by Ennius when he writes: “When by august augury famous Rome was founded.”

Ovid also calls attention to the etymological (or at least philological) similarities between the words *august* and *augur*, and notes the divine associations with the name Augustus:

...hic socium summo cum Iove nomen habet.
 sancta vocant augusta patres, augusta vocantur
 templa sacerdotum rite dictata manu;
 huius et augurium dependet origine verbi,
 et quodcumque sua Iuppiter auget ope.³

Only he [Augustus] has a name in common with highest Jove.
 Fathers call sacred things “august”, “august” are called
 The temples duly consecrated by priestly hands;
 “Augury” also hangs on the origin of this word,
 And that which Jupiter augments with his power.

³ Ovid, *Fasti* 1.608-1.612.

These religious connotations would have been no less powerful and significant when the female equivalent of this name was presented to Livia in accordance with Augustus' will; the name had also acquired new religious connotations acquired through its association with Augustus himself, *pontifex maximus* as well as *princeps* of Rome, and shortly to be consecrated as a *divus*.

Augustus' adoption of Tiberius had made Tiberius a Julian before he took on the title of Augustus; Augustus' adoption of Livia likewise made her a Julian, suggesting that the title Augusta, like the title Augustus, should be restricted to members of the Julian family. While Augustus may have intended to preserve some level of public status for Livia after his death, the primary reason for the adoption was most likely to support Tiberius' claim to the succession. The sacred connotations of Augusta, then, contributed to Tiberius' own sacred status although he balked at being officially known as "son of the Augusta," because this implied too strongly that he owed his position to his mother, and not his adopted father.⁴

Livia already held a measure of personal sacred status before taking on the title of Augusta. As the wife of the emperor, she was also the wife of the *pontifex maximus*; we know of no official duties or requirements for the wife of the *pontifex maximus* in the manner of the *flaminica*, wife of the *flamen dialis*, but it is difficult to imagine that the sacred status of the highest priest in Rome did not in some way affect the status of his wife. When Augustus became *pontifex maximus*, he dedicated a shrine of Vesta within his own house, effectively making his house not only public

⁴ Suet. *Tib.* 50.2.

property, but also a sacred space.⁵ As Barrett notes, the private hearth of Vesta represented the public hearth of the Roman empire, and Augustus had arranged matters so that his own hearth now fulfilled that essential symbolic role.⁶ By uniting the role of *princeps* with that of high priest, the first *princeps* imbued his position with a significant sacred status that was passed on to his successors. There has been little attempt in the scholarship to establish what effect, if any, this had on the public status of the imperial wife, given that matters of the hearth were traditional female responsibilities. Tiberius released a series of *pontifex maximus* coins celebrating his assumption of the title, which featured a seated female figure who has been variously interpreted as Livia in the guise of Pax, Pax-Iustitia or simply Livia in her role as priestess, widow of one *pontifex maximus* and mother of the next.⁷ There is certainly an implication here that to be wife (or mother) of the *pontifex maximus* was a significant honour. Pliny, in his *Panegyricus*, later compliments Plotina Augusta as not only a woman who is a model of the ancient virtues but also as a wife worthy of the *pontifex maximus*.⁸ This suggests that religious status remained an essential aspect of the imperial wife and Augusta's public image, and also that the dual status of the emperor's wife being also the wife of the *pontifex maximus* was worthy of comment.

Whatever sacred status Livia had held during her time as wife of the *princeps* and *pontifex maximus*, however, was minimal in comparison to that which she held during her time as imperial mother and the Augusta. After receiving the title, she

⁵ Ovid, *Fasti* 4.949-954; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, pp. 190-191.

⁶ Barrett, *Livia*, p. 143.

⁷ *BMC I Tiberius* 30; *RIC I Tiberius* 15-17.

⁸ Pliny, *Pan.* 83.4-83.6.

was made a priestess of the cult of Divus Augustus.⁹ While this role was separate from the title Augusta, both honours were closely associated with each other for some time; the next two Augustae, Antonia and Agrippina Minor were priestesses of Divus Augustus and Divus Claudius, respectively.¹⁰ As Augusta, and as the widow as well as the priestess of the deified Augustus, Livia herself took responsibility for paying a reward to the senator who claimed to have seen Augustus ascend into heaven in the manner of Romulus; in partnership with Tiberius she also built various shrines to the new Roman god Augustus.¹¹ The temple to Augustus on the Palatine is said by Pliny to have been erected by Livia alone.¹² Barrett refers to Livia's new role of *sacerdos* (priestess) as unprecedented, since the majority of important priesthoods in Rome were male.¹³ The significance of the Vestals and the *flaminica*, however, suggests that the concept of a prominent female priest was by no means alien to the Romans; in fact, many religious rituals of the city were reserved for women only.¹⁴ Livia was, however, awarded equal honours to the Vestals, and shared in their special priestly privileges; Tacitus tells us that Livia was allowed to sit in the theatre seats reserved for the Vestal Virgins and Dio tells us she was given the privilege of being attended by a lictor during her sacred duties.¹⁵ The lictor is particularly significant because it was not a usual priestly privilege even for men. Lictors generally attended magistrates, clearing the path before them and announcing their presence; the Vestals were said to have had this privilege extended to them in 42 BCE to prevent them from unwanted male attention. While other examples of "Vestal" privileges were awarded to various women of the imperial family

⁹ Pliny, *NH* 12.42.94.

¹⁰ Dio 59.4; Tac. *Ann.* 13.2.

¹¹ Dio 56.46.

¹² Pliny *NH* 12.42.94.

¹³ Barrett, *Livia*, p. 160.

¹⁴ Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores*, pp. 206-217; Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins*, *passim*.

¹⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 4.16.4; Dio 56.46.1.

throughout the Julio-Claudian dynasty, the use of the *lictor* remained an honour specific to religious duty. In the case of Livia, it certainly implies that her role as priestess of Divus Augustus gave her a religious status equal to that of the Vestals, the most religiously significant women in the city of Rome. Ovid describes Livia as the *coniunxque sacerdos* (“priestess-consort”) of Augustus, a powerful image which establishes Livia’s sacred status as being intrinsically linked to her role as the wife of Caesar.¹⁶ As Fishwick notes, the public honours awarded to Livia as a priestess, as well as the sacred aspects of the portrayal of Livia on coins and in private artwork, belie the various attempts by modern scholars to interpret Livia’s flamine as a marginal position relevant only to domestic worship of Augustus; despite the unusual situation of a woman serving as priest to a male god, the evidence strongly implies that Livia’s role as priestess formed part of the state cult.¹⁷

Her position as priestess of Divus Augustus was vital to the way in which Livia was publicly presented for the rest of her life. Instead of an entirely new portrait style being developed to match Livia’s new role, priestly attributes were added to pre-existing statue types.¹⁸ While she had usually been portrayed with unornamented hair, Livia now wore a veil in many of her portraits, on statuary as well as on gem carvings and coins. A statue currently in the Vatican is thought to represent Livia in her role as priestess because the statue was found near a nude (and thus divine) statue of Augustus.¹⁹ This example of Livia’s priestess statuary depicts her veiled, her arms outstretched in a priestly pose reminiscent of some of Augustus’ own *pontifex* statuary. The substantial religious imagery and iconography surrounding Livia

¹⁶ Ovid, *ex Ponto* 4.9.107.

¹⁷ Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 162-163.

¹⁸ Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, p. 103.

¹⁹ **Figure 5**; Barrett, *Livia*, p. 161.

during her time as Julia Augusta, and the close association between her role as priestess of Divus Augustus and her new name must be taken into account when considering the later women who received the title Augusta. While the name itself had those same religious connotations that had been relevant to the name Augustus, it was its connection with Livia that had imbued the name with the sacerdotal associations that it held in later years. While Tiberius refused to be officially named “son of the Augusta,” and scholars have generally paid more attention to the honours he refused his mother than those he allowed her, there can be little doubt that the strong promotion of Livia as a public priestess did much to elevate and support her son’s sacred status, just as her new name “Julia” and her background as the wife of Augustus supported his imperial status.

The sacerdotal role of Livia during her lifetime set a precedent for the rest of the Julio-Claudian Augustae. Antonia received her priesthood of Divus Augustus by the hand of Caligula, simultaneously with the title Augusta.²⁰ Indeed, the way that Dio presents these events implies that there was an intimate connection between becoming the Augusta, becoming the priestess of Divus Augustus, and receiving the privileges of the Vestal Virgins. Given that all three honours had also belonged to Livia, it is unsurprising that they would seem so closely entwined at this time. By giving Antonia the three honours that were so closely associated with Livia’s public image during the reign of Tiberius, Caligula was clearly representing his grandmother Antonia as a successor to Livia’s position of high maternal status. The Leptis Magna statue, securely identified as from Antonia’s lifetime rather than after her death, depicts Antonia stolate and veiled, evoking religious as well as maternal

²⁰ Dio 59.4.

virtues although it most likely predates Antonia's actual priesthood.²¹ While Antonia's priesthood only lasted a few weeks until her death early in Caligula's reign, her role as the priestess of Divus Augustus became a vital element of her posthumous public image. A coin-type celebrating Antonia, also from the Claudian period, specifically refers to her role as priestess of the deified Augustus.²² The title *sacerdos Divi Augusti*, both as an inscription beneath Antonia's name on the commemorative monument to the Claudian family and as a reverse legend on this coin type, demonstrates the continuing importance of this sacerdotal role to the posthumous public representation of Antonia as the mother of Claudius.²³ There were two primary reasons why Claudius would choose to emphasise the sacerdotal role Antonia had held briefly in life as part of her posthumous public image: he could promote the connection between his mother and Livia, thus reminding the populace of how he was connected to the Julio-Claudian family, and he could also augment his own sacred status by presenting his mother as the priestess of such a politically important cult.²⁴

Indeed, the fact that such a vital cult as that of the deified Augustus had a female priest is in itself significant, given that the only substantial roles for women in the Roman state religion had previously been in service to female gods; the only exception to this was, of course, the *flaminica* whose role in service to Jupiter was primarily to support her husband, the *flamen dialis*. Barrett notes that there was no obvious need for Livia's office to be created: the cult of Augustus was already well attended by the *flamen*, the Sodales Augustales, and the Arval Brothers who would

²¹ Figure 15; Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 158.

²² Figure 12.

²³ *CIL* 6.1.921.

²⁴ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, pp. 42.

carry out the necessary sacrifices.²⁵ He suggests that this may have been a way for Tiberius to give Livia a prominent public role without offending the more conservative Romans who did not like to see a woman rising in public status. This theory could certainly be extended to suggest that Antonia was likewise given the priesthood as part of an overall campaign to present her as the “new Livia” rather than specifically to add to her sacred status or because she had something to contribute to the role. However, this theory is based on an assumption that a female priest could only be ornamental, rather than fulfilling a specific purpose in the creation of a state cult. The roles of the Vestals and the *flaminica* suggest otherwise. While both types of priestess had a senior male priest who was in some way responsible for their positions and protection (the *pontifex maximus* and *flamen dialis* respectively), both the Vestals and the *flaminica* had specific ritualistic responsibilities that could not be performed by a male equivalent.²⁶ Their roles formed an essential element of an important state cult, and were tied not only to the acknowledgement of their respective patron gods, but also to the safety and well being of Rome. The positioning of Livia and later, Antonia, as female priests of Divus Augustus may well have been an attempt by the successors of Augustus (who all derived a substantial measure of sacred status from their familial relationship to him) to establish his cult as being significant enough to warrant the domestic rituals of women as well as the public rituals and sacrifices of men: to present Divus Augustus as an equivalent figure to Jupiter in the Roman pantheon.

²⁵ Barrett, *Livia*, p. 160.

²⁶ The rites of the Vestals included the tending of the sacred flame, the baking of *mola salsa* (“sacrifice-cake”), the annual cleaning of the *Aedes Vestae* and the burning of the cow-fetus at the rites of the *Fordicitia*. The Vestals also presided over the private women’s festival in honour of the *Bona Dea*, to which no man was allowed entrance. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.637-4.640; Beard, “Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins,” p. 13; Scheid, “Religious Roles of Roman Women,” p. 382-383. The religious responsibilities of the *flaminica* included a sacrifice every market day, and the *flaminica* herself was essential to the status of the *flamen dialis* - if she died, he had to resign his position which was otherwise for life. Macrobius *Sat.* 1.16.30; Cato, *De. Agric.* 143; Scheid, “Religious Roles of Roman Women,” p. 384.

The public image of Agrippina Minor closely parallels that of Livia: she was the most significant imperial woman of two reigns, those of her husband and her son. With the deification of Claudius, the first emperor since Augustus to receive that honour, Agrippina's position also came to reflect that of Livia in that they had both been not only wives of emperors, but were also widows of a god. As with Divus Augustus, a female sacerdotal role was created for the cult of Divus Claudius, and this priesthood was awarded to his widow.²⁷ Like the emperors before him, Nero evidently saw some value in being descended from the priestess of the deified emperor as well as the new *divus* himself. Agrippina was granted two lictors, one more than either the Chief Vestal or Livia herself, who had only been permitted to use her lictor while carrying out her duties as priestess of Augustus.²⁸ By deliberately increasing his mother's religious status above and beyond that held by previous imperial mothers, Nero was able to present himself as being more pious (in both a religious and familial sense) than previous emperors. The implication is also that Divus Claudius was a more important god than Divus Augustus, because his priestess was honoured at a higher level.

Like Livia and Antonia, Agrippina appears in statuary in her role as priestess, veiled and dressed in modest robes.²⁹ This suggests that Nero felt that the religious aspect of her public role was worth acknowledging, and that being a priestess added not only to his mother's public status, but also to his own. Later, when Agrippina felt her influence with her son slipping, she used her status as the widow and priestess of Divus Claudius to publicly berate Nero for his impiety not only to her, but also to the

²⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 13.2 .

²⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 12.26; Dio 61.33.2.

²⁹ **Figure 22.**

deified emperor.³⁰

The importance of sacerdotal roles and formal religious duties to the public status and iconography of the first three Augustae is undeniable, and sets up an expectation of similar sacred responsibilities of anyone who holds that title, whether or not this was the case.

A series of coins in gold, silver and bronze commemorating Matidia Augusta as the daughter of Diva Marciana implies by the representation of an altar on the *Pietas Aug.* reverse that Matidia may have been the priestess of her mother's cult.³¹ We know that Matidia became Augusta immediately upon the death and/or deification of her mother, and if she were made the priestess of the cult of Divus Marciana at the same time, it would fit the pattern established earlier by Livia and Antonia with Divus Augustus and Agrippina with Divus Claudius. By giving Matidia the title Augusta at this time, Trajan was elevating her to the position her mother had previously held: that of a companion equal in status and privilege to his wife Plotina. If indeed she was made priestess of Diva Marciana at the same time, this would further promote Matidia as a member of the imperial family, and reiterate her relationship to Trajan, while at the same time adding a measure of sacred status to Matidia and, by association, Trajan himself. Alternatively, the implication of priesthood on the coins may not refer to a specific sacerdotal role but may instead imply that being Augusta itself had certain inherent religious responsibilities.

Mattingly and Sydenham support this theory with their suggestion that the *Pudicitia*

³⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 13.14.

³¹ *RIC II Trajan* 758; *BMC III Trajan* 658; Bickerman, "Diva Augusta Marciana," p. 366.

reverse types of Faustina Minor, particularly those in which a female figure is seen at sacrifice, mark the importance of the role of the “empress” in Roman religion.³²

Other Faustina Minor reverse types suggesting a sacerdotal role (or inherent sacred status) are those in which priests and Vestals are represented at sacrifice.³³ As with the Matidia coins, these images may imply that Faustina Minor was officially made a priestess of her mother’s (or even her father’s) cult, though there is no literary evidence to support this. Instead, following the logic of Mattingly and Sydenham, the coin types may refer to a sacred role which Faustina Minor was intended to fulfil – not because she was the wife of the emperor (given that some of these coins date to her father’s reign) but because she was the Augusta. Coins released during the reign of Marcus Aurelius depict Faustina Minor on her own reverse type, veiled and in the act of sacrifice.³⁴ These coins are in honour of her new title of *Mater Castrorum*, and could refer to sacrifices made in order that the armies of Rome should have military success; responsibility for such sacrificial acts may have been due to Faustina as the emperor’s wife, or may have been a specific duty implied by *Mater Castrorum*. The coins dating to her father’s reign, however, coupled with the numismatic evidence of a religious role for Matidia, suggest that there is a specific sacred status for the Augusta, distinct from the sacred status allowed to the imperial wife for also being wife of the *pontifex maximus*.

Crispina, Commodus’ wife, also has coin reverses that imply sacerdotal practice.

Reverse types with the legends *Dis Coniugalibus* and *Dis Genitalibus* both depict a lighted altar, although Crispina’s own *Mater Castrorum* reverse type does not follow

³² *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 508a-508d, *M. Aurelius* 708; Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC III*, p. 19.

³³ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 1384.

³⁴ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 1659-1662.

that of her mother-in-law by representing herself at sacrifice.³⁵ The *Mater Castrorum* title may have been an attempt to make official the sacred status that had been assumed by Augustae for generations; it was restricted, however, to the Augustae who were also imperial wives.

With Julia Domna, we have substantial evidence that the imperial wife (and Augusta) was a figure imbued with public sacred status. The scholarship dealing with this subject has often over-emphasised Julia Domna's foreignness, suggesting that her Eastern origins were the reason why she was so involved in religious matters, that she personally encouraged the rise of Egyptian and Syrian religious elements in Roman society at this time, and that she was personally "assimilated" to various foreign goddesses; Gorrie presents a convincing rejection of this theory and of the prevailing attitude that foreignness was such a key aspect to Julia Domna's public image.³⁶

Indeed, Julia Domna's position is firmly that of the Roman *matrona*, and follows in a tradition of sacerdotal practice going back as far as Livia. By taking part in the Secular Games along with the Vestals and a hundred and ten *matronae* of the city, offering supplications to goddesses such as Juno and Diana whose worship was often seen as the responsibility of the married women of Rome, Julia Domna was placing herself in the position of something of a leader of the *matronae*.³⁷ The *matronae* had a vital role in many religious rituals throughout the year, mostly involving the worship of goddesses, and if the Augustae or the imperial wives had a sacred role to

³⁵ *BMC IV Commodus* 30-31, 39, 418.

³⁶ See Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," p. 66 for sources and discussion.

³⁷ Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," p. 63; epigraphic evidence provided by Scheid, "Religious Roles of Roman Women," pp. 394-395.

perform it is likely to have been as patroness (official or unofficial) of these women, and as a symbolic figure honouring the aspect of Roman religion for which they had responsibility. The evidence of Julia Domna's sacred duties and public religious representation certainly suggests this.

The idea of the imperial wife having a sacral role in state rituals along with her husband is also most evident in the artistic representations of Julia Domna. A coin type released for the Vota Publica celebrated in Rome after the victory in Britain in 211 CE, and the safe return of Caracalla and Geta, depicts Julia Domna in the act of sacrificing at an altar, a particularly notable image considering the views of modern scholarship of women's inability to participate in the act of sacrifice.³⁸ Similar coin types represent Caracalla and Geta at public sacrifice, suggesting that the figure on this coin type is Julia Domna herself rather than a personification of Pietas, as Mattingly suggests.³⁹ Julia Domna is also depicted as a priestess on the Gate of the Argentarii, alongside with her husband and younger son, and holds a *caduceus* while Severus performs the public sacrifice on an altar.⁴⁰ Plautilla Augusta and her father were also once a part of this depiction of the imperial family at sacrifice, appearing on a relief panel along with Caracalla, opposite Julia Domna and Septimius. Due to *damnatio memoriae*, however, both Plautilla and her father were removed from the sculpture, leaving only a blank space; later, the same was done for Geta's image on the same monument.⁴¹ The unfortunate effect of this destruction is that we cannot know how Plautilla Augusta was represented on the Gate of the Argentarii: whether

³⁸ Scheid reiterates the common belief of women's inability to participate in sacrifice, though it should be noted that this only refers to blood sacrifice, and that Scheid acknowledges the existence of exceptions to this rule such as the *flaminica*. Scheid, "Religious Roles of Roman Women," p. 384.

³⁹ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," p. 135.

⁴⁰ **Figure 59**; Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, pp. 280-282.

⁴¹ Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, pp. 279-280.

she held a *caduceus* like her mother-in-law or in any way was presented as participating in, rather than merely witnessing, the ritual. In any case, her presence suggests that the younger Augusta, like her mother-in-law, was expected to fulfil certain religious responsibilities on behalf of the imperial family.

A further level of sacred status for Julia Domna might be inferred from the fact that she was the daughter of the hereditary high priest of Baal at Emesa.⁴² The only other Augustae whom we know to have been daughters of priests were those who were daughter of a *princeps* and thus of the *pontifex maximus*: Claudia, Julia Titi, Faustina Minor and Livilla. There is no evidence, however, that being the daughter of the *pontifex maximus* was an aspect ever emphasised in the public image of imperial women, which suggests that any sacred status which Julia Domna did gain from her position as daughter of the far less politically significant priest of Baal would have been slight and purely honorary.

The appellation *sanctissima* is often found in inscriptions dedicated to the Severan Augustae such as Julia Domna and Julia Maesa.⁴³ This clearly suggests that, by the Severan period, the sacred connotations attached to the Augustae had become an official rather than implied part of the public image surrounding the imperial family.

The *carpentum*, both as a symbolic image and as an actual privilege, was associated closely with the women of the imperial family under the Julio-Claudians, though not specifically with the title Augusta. Under later dynasties, the *carpentum* was more closely associated with the Augustae, usually as a memorial symbol. The *carpentum*

⁴² Grant, *The Severans*, p. 45.

⁴³ *PIR*² *Iulia Domna Augusta* 663, *Iulia Maesa* 678.

itself was a covered carriage which only priests were allowed to ride through the city; it is particularly associated with Vestals and is another example of a “Vestal privilege” which was also awarded to many women of the imperial family. The *carpentum* is also associated with funerals, and appears on many coin issues released by Tiberius in commemoration of the death of Julia Livilla and Livia, by Caligula in memory of his mother, Agrippina Major, and by Claudius in memory of Antonia.⁴⁴ It may be significant that the *carpentum* coin released in honour of Antonia emphasises her role as priestess of Augustus; however, the icon is certainly not restricted to those imperial women whom we know to have been priestesses.⁴⁵ The ceremonial use of the *carpentum* is often used as an explanation as to why the image is being used in association with particular women: a Tiberius coin type which commemorates Livia’s sacred status has a *carpentum* reverse and Mattingly suggests that the coin may refer to the *supplicatio* decreed by the senate in 22 CE in honour of Livia’s recovery from an illness, a ceremony that would have involved a *carpentum*.⁴⁶ Rose interprets this coin as a posthumous dedication to Livia, (a theory Mattingly had previously dismissed for reasons of dating) reminding the public of the honours Livia shared with the Vestals during her lifetime.⁴⁷ Whether or not Livia did receive the right to ride in a *carpentum* during her lifetime, this coin issue certainly associates her with the sacred carriage.

Later emperors also used the *carpentum* on coin releases honouring the women of their family. Titus released a coin issue depicting the *carpentum* with the legend

⁴⁴ **Figure 17**; *BMC I Tiberius* 76-78, *Claudius* 81-87; Wood, *Imperial Women*, p. 317.

⁴⁵ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, pp. 88-89.

⁴⁶ *BMC I Tiberius* 76-78; Mattingly, *BMC I* cxxxv.

⁴⁷ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 28.

Memoriae Domitillae.⁴⁸ This is one instance where we can be certain that the woman in question was not a public priestess; it is likely, however, that Titus was deliberately referring back to the iconography of the Julio-Claudians by borrowing an image which was frequently used to posthumously commemorate the mothers of emperors. There is no clear evidence, however, as to whether the Domitilla commemorate on these coins was the mother or sister of Titus, and also whether she was the same Domitilla later deified and named Augusta.

Domitian likewise commemorated Julia Titi's death with a *carpentum* coin issue, though Julia's deification was specifically noted on these coins, where Domitilla's was not.⁴⁹ Marciana, sister of Trajan, also had her death and deification marked by a *carpentum* coin issue, as did Faustina Major, wife of Antoninus Pius; unusually, her daughter Faustina Minor received a *carpentum* coin issue during her lifetime.⁵⁰ The seeming anomaly of the Faustina Minor coin issue may be a reference to her mother's death. Alternatively it could allude to Faustina Minor's own religious role, implying either that she was a priestess in her own right (possibly, as with Matidia, a priestess of her deified mother) or that she had received the priestly privileges of the Vestals. The primary use of the *carpentum* as a numismatic image was undoubtedly to honour posthumously beloved women of the emperor's family, and was particularly associated with mothers; the theory that this is a reference to the privileges of the Vestals is far more tenuous, though the important relationship between the imperial women, the Augustae and the Vestals can be established through many other forms of evidence. The *carpentum* remains a recurring image that contributes to the overall picture of the sacred status held by and attributes to the

⁴⁸ *RIC II Titus* 153.

⁴⁹ *RIC II Domitian* 411.

⁵⁰ *RIC II Trajan* 746, 749.

Augustae, though it was certainly not exclusive to the women who held this title.

Further evidence the title Augusta held connotations of sacred status can be found in a series of anecdotes that present particular Augustae – especially the imperial mothers – in the role of augur. Livia, Agrippina, Sextilia, Faustina Minor and Julia Domna all feature in augury-tales which predict the fortunes of their sons, often while pregnant with the “emperor-to-be.”⁵¹ This tradition of augury-tales surrounding the pregnancies of future imperial mothers, or the births or childhoods of their sons transforms these particular Augustae into prophetesses; it is not the fathers who are credited with a sacred foreknowledge of their children’s destinies, but the mothers. This tradition is also evident with imperial mothers who are not Augustae, such as Augustus’ mother Atia, whose pregnancy is surrounded by stories of prophecy and omen.⁵² Even if (as is very likely) these tales were designed after the fact to augment the status of the emperors in question by suggesting that their imperial careers were foretold by the gods, the effect is that their mothers are represented as vessels of their own sacred destiny; indeed, it is the imperial mother who is the central sacral figure in each of these stories. This representation of so many imperial mothers who were also Augustae in the role of augur imbues the title of Augusta with further sacral implications.

Another significant aspect of the “official” sacred role of the Augustae can be found in the celebration of their birthdays as religious festivals. During the reign of Augustus, the celebration of birthdays of Augustus’ male relatives (not only his heirs) became a common tradition; his female relatives, however, were not so openly

⁵¹ Suet. *Tiberius* 111-112, *Nero* 6.1, 6.4; Dio 61.2.2; Tac. *Ann* 14.9.2-14.9.5; *Hist. Aug. Commodus Antoninus* 1.3-1.4, *Geta* 3.5.

⁵² Suet. *Aug.* 94.4.

honoured. Rather than officially declare Livia's birthday as a celebration, Augustus chose to dedicate the Ara Pacis on that day, 30 January, the effect of which was that Livia was closely associated with this vital monument; this reveals that Augustus was still resistant to publicly promoting the women of this family in the same manner as the men.⁵³

Tiberius began a tradition of formally celebrating the birthday of the Augusta. According to an inscription from the Forum Clodii, the *duumviri* presented honeyed wine and cake to the women associated with the Bona Dea (*matronae*) in honour of Livia's birthday.⁵⁴ Another festival created in celebration of Tiberius which also acknowledged his mother was on the 10th of March, the day on which he was made *pontifex maximus* and also the day on which statues to the Caesars and the Augusta were dedicated; the *duumvirs* pledged to give honey-wine and cakes to the decurions and the people on that day in perpetuity, although there is no evidence whether or not they actually did so.⁵⁵ A Greek inscription records a Kaisareia festival held by the city of Gytheum in honour of the imperial family during the reign of Tiberius with a particular focus on Divus Augustus as well as the living emperor and his mother.⁵⁶ A whole day of this eight-day festival was dedicated to Livia, and she was assimilated to the goddess Tyche, the Greek equivalent of Fortuna.

There is little evidence as to the continuing celebration of the birthdays of the Augustae, though we do have inscriptional evidence that the Arvals held a sacrifice

⁵³ Purcell, "Livia and the Womanhood," pp. 91-92.

⁵⁴ *CIL* 11.3303; Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, pp. 88-89.

⁵⁵ *CIL* 11.3303; Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, pp. 88-89.

⁵⁶ *SEG* 11.922-3 = Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, Cat. 74: Gytheum, pp. 142-144.

on the birthday of Antonia Augusta.⁵⁷ A freedman of Domitia and his wife established a foundation to pay for celebrations to be held on Domitia's birthday, as a form of posthumous commemoration.⁵⁸ Julia Mamaea's birthday was not officially celebrated, but Alexander's birthday was named as a festival after his death, in his mother's name as well as his own.⁵⁹ The evidence certainly suggests that the idea of celebrating the birthday of the living Augusta did not continue in any formal sense beyond the Julio-Claudians.

More concrete evidence of an association between the Augusta and formal religious practice is her role as a patron of temples, particularly those associated with the ceremonies and rituals of the *matronae*. Livia was particularly active in the foundation and restoration of many shrines and temples, during her time as the wife of Augustus as well as her time as the Augusta and priestess of Divus Augustus. This provided a model for many later Augustae to emulate. While Augustus or Tiberius have often been credited with these examples of temple patronage, current scholarship suggests that Livia was personally involved in the financing of these building works, or that it was in the interest of her husband and son to claim that she was personally involved.⁶⁰ These works include the foundation of the *Aedes Concordiae*.⁶¹ This temple, in honour of Livia's successful and harmonious marriage, was associated with her own *Porticus Liviae*, and is often confused with a second shrine to Concordia which Tiberius dedicated in the Forum, possibly with the participation of Livia, referred to in Ovid's *Fasti*.⁶²

⁵⁷ Koll, *The Ruler Cult under Caligula*, p. 67.

⁵⁸ CIL 14.2795; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 86-87.

⁵⁹ *Hist. Aug. Alexander Severus*, 63.4.

⁶⁰ Purcell, "Livia and the Womanhood," pp. 88-90; Barrett, *Livia*, pp. 201-205.

⁶¹ Ovid, *Fasti* 6.637-6.638.

⁶² Ovid, *Fasti* 1.637-650; Flory, "Sic Exempla," pp. 311-312.

It is the Concordia shrine of the *Porticus Liviae* that is of most interest, however, because it is linked with a particularly sacred day, June 11, on which the Matralia (a female religious festival celebrating the Mater Matuta) was held.⁶³ Livia's name also appears on an inscription crediting her with the restoration of the temple of Fortuna Muliebris (fortune for wives/women), which was one of the focal points of women's religion in Rome because it celebrated Volumnia and Veturia, Roman heroines from the early days of the Republic who had, along with a delegation of *matronae*, dissuaded their son and husband Coriolanus from entering Rome with an army at his back.⁶⁴ Fragments of the dedicatory inscription of this temple still survive, displaying the manner in which the temple's new patron chose to describe herself: firstly as the daughter of Drusus and only secondly as the wife of Augustus.⁶⁵ As Barrett notes, this restoration had the benefit of associating Livia with virtuous wives and mothers who had valiantly served the state.⁶⁶ Ovid also attributes to Livia the restoration of the temple of the Bona Dea, another goddess whose rites were of particular significance to the Roman *matronae*.⁶⁷ This may be the reason why Livia's birthday festival made reference to the Bona Dea and the women who served her. Other restorations credited to Livia (possibly in partnership with Julia) were those of the shrines to Pudicitia Patricia and Pudicitia Plebeia, which had powerful connotations of domestic virtue as well as female religious piety.⁶⁸ By taking on the role of religious patron to a variety of goddesses and temples (or appearing to have done so), Livia emerges as the most spiritually and religiously significant female of

⁶³ Flory "Sic Exempla," p. 313.

⁶⁴ *CIL* 6.883.

⁶⁵ Purcell, "Livia and the Womanhood," p. 88.

⁶⁶ Barrett, *Livia*, p. 205.

⁶⁷ Ovid, *Fasti* 5.147-5.157.

⁶⁸ Propertius 2.6.25-2.6.26; Livy 10.23.1; Suet. *Aug.* 34.1; Kleiner, "Imperial Women as Patrons," p. 33.

the Augustan principate, supporting the idea that Augustus was keen to support his status as *pontifex maximus* by having a wife who possessed her own religious role and status. Also, in a manner later reflected by Julia Domna, Livia appears to be taking a role as patron of the *matronae* themselves, by supporting and financing so many monuments that were integral to the religious duties of the Roman wives and mothers.

While there is not the same wealth of evidence to prove that later Augustae followed in the tradition of religious patronage that Livia had established, there are continuing examples of the Augusta as a founder of temples. Agrippina commissioned a temple to the deified Claudius on the Caelian Hill. The planned temple (not completed in Agrippina's lifetime due to interference from Nero) was grandiose, and would have become the largest area devoted to a single religious object in the history of Rome, far larger than the temples of Julius and Augustus in the forum.⁶⁹ This supports the idea that Agrippina's public image during the reign of Nero relied heavily on her role as the priestess and widow of Divus Claudius. It has also been suggested that Plotina was responsible for the erection of an *Ara Pudicitiae* in Rome, based mainly on a series of Trajan-Plotina coins that depict the altar on the reverse.⁷⁰ This suggests that Plotina was emulating Livia not only as a patron of public works, but also as a patron of religious monuments that were associated with the rites of Roman *matronae*.

Like Livia, Julia Domna was well known as a patron of temples. During the Parthian Wars, she is said to have used her influence with her husband to prevent the sacking

⁶⁹ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 46.

⁷⁰ BMC III Trajan 529; Cresswell, *Augusta*, p.122.

of a temple at Hatra.⁷¹ Also, the Severan restoration of the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris⁷² has been at least partly credited to Julia Domna, whose name appears in an inscription along with that of Septimius and their sons; this inscription, which may well have been established despite only minor repairs being made to the temple, is another attempt to link the new dynasty to the traditions of the past, and the Augustan ideals that Septimius Severus was keen to associate with his own family and regime.⁷³ Certainly, naming Julia Domna in this context associates her not only with the legendary wife and mother of Coriolanus, but also with Livia in her role as patron of female religious monuments. Even more significantly, it has been suggested that the restoration of the *Aedes Vestae* during her husband's reign should be attributed directly to Julia Domna.⁷⁴ This vital restoration, which was necessary after a great fire destroyed the temple and house of the Vestals, is not commemorated on any coin issues of the emperor, but only on those of Julia Domna herself.⁷⁵ Because of Vesta's association with *matronae* and female ritual, as well as her long association with the Augustae, it may have been deemed more politically appropriate for Julia Domna herself to receive the credit for the restoration of the temple and house of the Vestals; alternatively, she may actually have been the true patron of the project, in her capacity as wife of the emperor and *pontifex maximus*. Julia Domna's personal involvement in the restoration of the *Atrium Vestae*, the personal residence of the Vestals, is less certain because it is not commemorated on the coinage. However, the dedication of statues in honour of two Vestals who had taken part in the Secular Games with Julia Domna, and the necessary connection between the two

⁷¹ Grant, *The Severans*, p. 46.

⁷² The same temple restored by Livia, as discussed on page 249 of this thesis.

⁷³ *CIL* 6.883; Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," pp. 68-70.

⁷⁴ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," p. 124.

⁷⁵ *BMC V Septimius & Caracalla* 96-97, 796, Caracalla 232-233; Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage," pp. 65-66.

restoration projects, strongly suggests that she also served as patroness in this instance.⁷⁶ That the temple of the Vestals still appears on a Julia Domna reverse type during the reign of Caracalla reveals that her association with this goddess continued beyond her patronage of the building project from the reign of Septimius, and thus was a feature of her whole career as Augusta rather than specifically belonging to her period as imperial wife.

There is certainly a comprehensive body of evidence to suggest that the women who were Augustae were imbued with a certain sacred status, even if a great deal of that status emanated from their familial ties and proximity to the emperor, himself a figure of immense sacred status. Sacerdotal and other religious associations can certainly be identified as an integral part of the public representation of the women who held this title, particularly the early Julio-Claudians, and Julia Domna. Many Augustae, including those whom we do not know to have formally held sacerdotal roles, are presented with veils in statuary and on the coinage. Piety and religious responsibility were virtues that an Augusta was expected to embody, along with chastity, modesty and fertility; and, in many cases, the Augusta was also a *sacerdos* in her own right. The religious iconography associated with the public image of the Augusta from Livia onwards suggests that the title Augusta itself acquired powerful connotations of sacred as well as political significance. It also seems likely that the Augusta – certainly those who were imperial wives, but possibly all the women who held this title – may have fulfilled a specific role (formal or informal) as a symbolic figure of religious ritual, alongside the emperor. The primary purpose of this sacred status, as with all types of public status and representation surrounding the Augustae,

⁷⁶ Gorrie, “Julia Domna’s Building Patronage,” pp. 67-68.

was undoubtedly to augment the status of their sons and potential sons, the real and potential emperors and heirs of Rome.

A further component of the sacred status of the Augusta is the deification of many of the women who held that title, and the public representation of these *divae*. Also relevant is the divine representation ascribed to so many more of the Augustae who were never officially consecrated. The close associations between the *divae* and the Augustae of Rome must have contributed to the overall sacred status of the title Augusta; in any case, both were tools used by the Augusti to promote the women in their family and, in particular, to imbue the children of those women (either the emperor himself or his chosen heirs) with a powerful sacred status and authority.

Of the twenty eight women who were named Augusta between the reigns of Augustus and Severus Alexander, we have evidence that at least twelve were officially deified by the Roman state after their deaths, those being Livia, Poppaea, Claudia, Flavia Domitilla, Julia Titi, Plotina, Marciana, Matidia, Sabina, Faustina Major, Faustina Minor, and Julia Maesa. During this time only one non-Augusta was named a goddess: Caligula's sister Drusilla. Many imperial women who were never officially consecrated were still commemorated as *divae* in inscriptional evidence, and many of the imperial women who were deified after their deaths had received some kind of inscriptional identity as a *diva* throughout their lifetime, just as many emperors were identified as a *divus* during their lifetimes. This is particularly the case with inscriptional evidence gathered from the East, where the association between living rulers and the divine was more acceptable than in Rome itself, but can also be seen throughout municipal Italy. The problem with

inscriptional evidence for deification is that little distinction is made between what Gradel (and Tertullian) refer to as *municipalis consecratio* (“civic worship”) and official state worship, so that most inscriptional references to a *divus* or *diva* do not specify whether this is an advanced form of flattery, an unofficial statement of worship, or acknowledgement of an official consecration.⁷⁷ Wood notes the common use of *thea* in provincial mints to denote an imperial woman who has given birth, though in some cases (as with Claudia Octavia, wife of Nero) even that was not necessary to earn the epithet of “goddess.”⁷⁸

It is misleading to say, as Gradel does, that after Tiberius, “all empresses who predeceased their august husband received state deification.”⁷⁹ Not only does this leave out imperial wives such as Messalina, Octavia and Crispina who certainly were not honoured thus, but it also puts an unnecessary focus on imperial wives whereas, like the title Augusta, an imperial woman was more likely to be made a *diva* by her son; assuming, of course, that by “empress” Gradel does in fact mean “imperial wife”. This sweeping statement, along with reference to deification becoming a “conventional, even mechanical response to imperial deaths,” reflects common assumptions about the title of Augusta, and the imperial women to whom it was presented after the Julio-Claudian period.⁸⁰ While the deification of all emperors who were succeeded by their children became a regular event in Roman imperial history (as noted by Herodian), it is dangerous to make any assumption that such a process was by any means automatic.⁸¹ In the case of imperial women, where there was far less expectation of divine honours, it is even more important to view each

⁷⁷ Tertull. *Apol.* 24.8; Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 73.

⁷⁸ Wood, “The Incredible, Vanishing Wives of Nero,” p. 6.

⁷⁹ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 287.

⁸⁰ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 287.

⁸¹ Herodian 4.2.1.

consecration as an individual political decision rather than an expected response.

In the case of Livia, the first Augusta to be consecrated, the immediate benefits to Claudius, the emperor who arranged the consecration, are evident. By declaring Livia to be a goddess, Claudius was able to remind the Roman populace exactly who he was in relation to the Julio-Claudian family; just as his public promotion of his mother Antonia as Augusta reminded the world that Claudius was descended from Augustus' sister and niece, his promotion of Diva Augusta reminded the world that Livia had been his grandmother. The other benefit of Livia's deification was to further imbue the title Augusta with a sacred status that Claudius, as son and grandson of the two Augustae, could only benefit from: indeed, the consecration of the first Augusta created an implication that all Augustae were potential *divae*.

The consecrations of both Augustus and Drusilla had followed the traditions of their predecessor Romulus, in that witnesses were found to testify that the new *divi* had indeed ascended to heaven; from Livia onwards there is no record of such witnesses, suggesting that the process of consecration no longer required such testimonies.⁸²

Opinions as to whether the Romans believed that consecration was a form of recognition of a previously existing godhood, or the creation of a new god, have varied widely over the years. Gradel notes that it is the Christian perspective of many historians that has pushed the theory of previously existing divinity into such prominence over the years, as the concept of created godhood seems irreligious only when viewed through a monotheistic perspective.⁸³

⁸² Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, pp. 295-297.

⁸³ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, pp.288-298.

Livia's status as a Claudian goddess was further augmented by the long tradition of divine imagery connected with her public image throughout her life, and during the period between her death and deification. In the East, inscriptions dating back as far as the reign of Augustus use the epithets *thea* and *Sebastê* in reference to Livia.⁸⁴ As identified by Grether, inscriptions established in Mylae, Cyzicus, Larisa, Samos and Aphrodisias towards the end of Livia's life refer to priestesses of an official cult worshipping Julia Augusta; in Mylae and Samos as well as various other Greek towns Livia was identified with Hera, while at Cyzicus she was identified with the attributes of Athena Polias, their patron goddess from the Mithradatic war.⁸⁵ Tacitus tells us that the cities of Asia decreed a temple in honour of Tiberius, his mother and the senate, for which they received official permission.⁸⁶ This all suggests a general expectation that Livia, in her public role as mother of the emperor Tiberius, would eventually join her husband as a goddess.

After Livia's official consecration, Claudius utilised the image of Diva Augusta in various public artworks, reiterating the idea that the Claudian family was descended from a goddess. Many of these statues, paired with those of Divus Augustus, were included in Claudian family groups.⁸⁷ Perhaps the most important goddess statue of Livia was that which Claudius dedicated in the temple of Divus Augustus, when the temple was re-dedicated in 42 CE to include Diva Augusta. While the statue no longer exists, coins were released simultaneously which we assume to depict a reasonable facsimile of what the Diva Augusta statue looked like; Diva Augusta

⁸⁴ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 322-334.

⁸⁵ CIG 2.333, 2.2815; IGR 4.144, 4.984; IG 12.2.333; Grether, "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult," p. 241.

⁸⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 4.15.3.

⁸⁷ *CIL* 10.1413, 1417; Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 92.

wears a diadem and sits upon a throne, holding a long torch and ears of corn.⁸⁸ A colossal enthroned statue of Diva Augusta, found within the headquarters of the *Augustales* of Rusellae as a pair with a Divus Augustus, is thought to be a copy of that original cult statue from Rome, because of its similarities to the numismatic depiction.⁸⁹

The actual worship of Diva Augusta, and the offering of the proper sacrifices, was placed into the hands of the Vestal Virgins.⁹⁰ Given the other religious responsibilities of these priestesses, including not only the rituals of their goddess but those of the Bona Dea, this implies that Diva Augusta was intended as a women's goddess, with a clear connection to the *matronae* of Rome.⁹¹

Livia was not only Diva Augusta in Rome but throughout Italy and beyond. Inscriptions from Ostia, Malta (Goulos), Corfinium, Baeteris, Narbonensis and Phillipi refer to priestesses of Diva Augusta.⁹² In the Eastern provinces there was less of a standardisation of the consecrated Livia's worship and titles, and there is little difference between the manner in which the Augusta was worshipped before Rome officially declared her to be a goddess and afterwards.⁹³

Livia's cult lasted longer than that of any other deified imperial woman in Rome, publicly resurfacing from time to time when association with her image was politically prudent. Under Nero, the Arval Brothers listed Diva Augusta as

⁸⁸ *BMC I Claudius* 224-225; *RIC I Claudius* 86; Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 113.

⁸⁹ Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 118.

⁹⁰ Dio 60.5.2; *CIL* 6.2032.

⁹¹ Cic. *Ad Att.* 1.13.

⁹² *CIL* 3.651, 12.4249, 14.399; *ILS* 121; *AE* 1988.422, 1991.1428a-14428d; Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 326-7.

⁹³ Grether, "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult," pp. 249-251.

outranking Divus Claudius.⁹⁴ More significantly, Galba released a series of Diva Augusta coins to imply an association between himself the Julio-Claudian family.⁹⁵ This is important because it is a rare instance of an imperial woman's public image being utilised by an emperor of a later dynasty to her own, who could not claim descent from her or association by marriage. It seems likely that the cult of Diva Augusta remained until the reigns of Marcus Aurelius or Commodus.⁹⁶ When the temple of Divus Augustus was restored during the Antonine period, the temple itself was commemorated on a series of coins, with two cult statues (a male and a female, evidently Augustus and Augusta) visible inside.⁹⁷ According to Fishwick, the *divae* who followed Livia generally had their cult administered by a *flaminica* (sometimes but not always the wife of a *flamen* dedicated to Divus Augustus or the *divi* in general); this is the case both within Rome and in municipal/provincial cult, and appears to continue at least into the Flavian era.⁹⁸

Part of Livia's longevity as a goddess of the imperial family can be attributed to the pairing of Diva Augusta and Divus Augustus; around the late 40's CE, the two cults even shared a *flamen*.⁹⁹ While everyone would have known that Diva Augusta was Livia, it may be that the "anonymity" of her identity as a goddess also contributed to this longevity. Her role as a deified Augusta can be seen as generic as well as specific to her identity, and implies that all women who hold the name Augusta are only one step away from the divine. Livia's continuing presence within the religious rituals and monuments of Rome, and the focus on the name Augusta in her divine

⁹⁴ CIL 6.2041; Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 179.

⁹⁵ RIC I Galba 3-4, 27; BMC I Galba 3-13.

⁹⁶ Grether, "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult," pp. 251-252.

⁹⁷ RIC III Antoninus Pius 124, 284, 755, 795-796, 973, 988, 994, 998, 1003-1004, 1013; BMC IV Antoninus Pius 224, 1652, 1729-1730, 2051-2052, 2098; Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 113.

⁹⁸ Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 165-166.

⁹⁹ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 275.

nomenclature, would have powerfully augmented the sacred status of all Augustae, just as the continuing presence and representation of Divus Augustus augmented the sacred status of the succeeding Augusti.

The posthumous promotion of Livia as Diva Augusta may have been at least partly responsible for the inscriptional evidence that both Antonia and Agrippina, neither of whom were formally consecrated as goddesses, were nevertheless informally heralded as goddesses in the East.¹⁰⁰ Several shrines were dedicated to Antonia, forming part of an unofficial cult to Antonia and her husband Drusus.¹⁰¹ While these shrines emphasise Antonia's role as wife, they would undoubtedly have been intended to promote Antonia and Drusus as the parents of Claudius. Agrippina's goddess imagery is more overtly maternal, with the pairing of Agrippina and her son Nero a popular numismatic image in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰² Her strong association with the goddess Ceres in Eastern inscriptions strongly emphasises this image of Agrippina as a figure of maternal divinity.¹⁰³ It should also be noted that this informal celebration of Julio-Claudian women as goddesses in the East was by no means restricted to those who held the title Augusta in Rome. Julia Major was named both *thea* and *Sebastê* in Eastern epigraphs, as were Agrippina Major and Messalina.¹⁰⁴ Livilla, Drusilla, Claudia Octavia and Statilia Messalina have *thea*

¹⁰⁰ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 119-120 (Antonia), pp. 336-337 (Antonia), 348-356 (Agrippina); Barrett, *Agrippina*, p. 221-223; Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, pp. 43, 49. Kokkinos (p. 31, pp. 49-50) assembles a case that Antonia was actually deified, based on a reinterpretation of various Claudian *Diva Augusta* inscriptions as belonging to Antonia rather than Livia. Given the continuing representation of Diva Augusta as the consort of Divus Augustus, however, this is less than convincing; there is no evidence that any deified Augusta other than Livia was ever heralded as Diva Augusta, and no supporting literary evidence that Antonia was deified at all.

¹⁰¹ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta*, p. 31.

¹⁰² Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 47.

¹⁰³ IGR 4.22, 4.81; IG 12.2.208, 12.2.211, 12.2.258.

¹⁰⁴ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p. 107, (Julia Major), p. 132-139 (Agrippina), pp. 175-176 (Messalina), pp. 334-336 (Julia Major), p. 337-341 (Agrippina), pp. 345-347 (Messalina).

inscriptions, but not *Sebastê*.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps more significantly, the statuary of Agrippina Minor regularly depicts her wearing a diadem. For a mortal woman to be so blatantly heralded with an attribute of a goddess was groundbreaking, and it is believed that Agrippina was the first Roman woman to have been portrayed thus during her lifetime.¹⁰⁶ The diadem later became a common imperial attribute, and through its appearance on portraits of imperial women became known as an attribute of the Augusta. That Agrippina should be depicted thus, however, represents a marked difference from the way imperial women were represented before the reign of Claudius (or indeed, before his marriage to Agrippina, as no such honour was given to Messalina). It was surely Agrippina's own imperial blood and direct descent from Augustus that allowed such a blatant symbol of divinity to be implied in her living portraiture.

Poppaea, wife of Nero, and their baby daughter Claudia, were both officially consecrated as goddesses.¹⁰⁷ Claudia's death and deification predated that of her mother, but after Poppaea's consecration, the two were celebrated together rather than separately. A provincial coin from the Roman East represents Diva Poppaea on the obverse, and Diva Claudia on the reverse, within their respective temples.¹⁰⁸ This representation of mother and daughter goddesses had no precedent in Rome, though it set a precedent that would later be utilised with Marciana and Matidia, the sister and niece of Trajan. Poppaea was not only the first non-Julian to receive the

¹⁰⁵ Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 152-153 (Drusilla), pp. 223-224 (Statilia Messalina), p. 337 (Livilla), pp. 341-344 (Drusilla) pp. 355-356 (Octavia), p. 358 (Statilia Messalina). The exception to this, a rare inscription giving Statilia Messalina the epithet of *Sebastê*, is discussed on page 45 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁶ **Figure 21**; Barrett, *Agrippina*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁷ Dio 63.26.3; Tac. *Ann.* 15.23, 16.21.

¹⁰⁸ **Figure 25, Figure 26.**

title Augusta (and this only upon the birth of her daughter) but was also the first non-Julian to be deified. Dio notes that Poppaea was assimilated to Venus after her consecration, and Rose interprets this as an attempt to use similar iconography for Diva Poppaea as had been used for Diva Drusilla.¹⁰⁹ Given the importance of Venus, particularly her Genetrix aspect, to the Julian family, this can certainly be read as an attempt by Nero to connect Diva Poppaea more closely to the imperial family.

The Arval Brothers offered sacrifices to Diva Poppaea Augusta and Diva Claudia Virgo during Nero's reign, but neither the cult surrounding the deified Poppaea nor that of her daughter lasted very long; from Otho onwards there is no trace of their worship.¹¹⁰ As Gradel notes, baby Claudia's deification, as with Caligula's deification of Drusilla, had no political expediency other than flattery to the living emperor.¹¹¹ The continuing worship of Livia as Diva Augusta was an exception in the history of *divae*, and owed more to the continuing relevance of Augustus to the dynasties of Augusti that followed his own. Under Vespasian, the official worship of the *divi* as recorded by the Arvals was greatly reduced, which Fishwick interprets as a cost-saving attempt rather than any specific religious statement.¹¹² The cult of the *divi* was not entirely erased by Vespasian, however: it was renewed by Titus after Vespasian's death and deification, so that that new emperor could claim the benefit of being the son of a god.¹¹³

The effect of this period of less substantial worship of the *divi* was to quietly marginalise the Julian *divi*, or at least the less politically significant of these. While

¹⁰⁹ Dio 63.26.3; Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, p. 49.

¹¹⁰ McGannon, *Emperor Worship under Nero*, p. 89.

¹¹¹ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 287.

¹¹² Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 297.

¹¹³ Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 297.

Divus Augustus (and, due to her attachment to his cult, Diva Augusta) continued to be acknowledged under the Flavians, and Divus Claudius received the benefit of an anti-Nero statement by having his temple completed under Vespasian, the focus was now very much on the new Flavian *divae*: the parents of the emperor Titus.¹¹⁴ That Poppaea's and Claudia's sacrifices were not renewed by the Arvals under Titus is hardly surprising, given their status as Neronian *divae*. It is clear from this evidence that the primary role of the deified Augustae – as with the primary role of the Augustae themselves – was to support the public image and propaganda of the emperor himself. The sacred status that the Augustae themselves received from the deification of so many women who held that title was a secondary benefit, and one which also served the emperor's own public image: particularly the emperor who, like Titus, had the benefit of being the son of a Diva and an Augusta.

Juno's peacock is generally thought to be symbolic of deified "empresses" just as the eagle was a symbol of deified emperors.¹¹⁵ This belief, however, is based largely on the coinage from the Antonines: under the Flavians, the peacock was associated with all three Augustae of that family, who were each either an imperial wife or deified, but not both.¹¹⁶

Diva Domitilla did not have as substantial a cult as, for example, that of the deified Vespasian, but an inscription from the temple of Diva Faustina at Patavium does refer to a *sacerdos Divae Domitillae*, which at least tells us that the deified mother/sister of Titus was actively worshipped in part of the Roman world, beyond

¹¹⁴ Suet. *Vesp.* 8.

¹¹⁵ Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 48.

¹¹⁶ *RIC II Titus* 70, *Domitian* 212-21b, 215-215b, 250; *BMC II Titus* 136, *Domitian* 60-61, 67, 217-218a, 249; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 47; Varner, "Domitia Longina," pp. 201-202.

the coin releases of Titus and Domitian.¹¹⁷ Evidence of Domitilla's statuary, divine or otherwise, is limited, with most extant portraits damaged or only surviving in fragments.¹¹⁸ The numismatic and epigraphic evidence makes it clear that Domitilla's role as a goddess was primarily in support of Vespasian's own divine image, and may have been deliberately intended to evoke the similarly paired Divus Augustus and Diva Augusta in the minds of the populace.¹¹⁹ Domitilla's public representation makes more sense if she is read as the wife rather than daughter of Vespasian, and she most often appears in conjunction with his image. The intent of her deification and public image, however, was clearly to promote Titus, rather than out of any desire to honour her in her own right. While Domitilla was not the first woman posthumously made a *diva* or an Augusta, she is most likely the first (Claudia's case being problematic) to have received both titles simultaneously, thus allowing for no separate *diva* or Augusta representation. Again, this can be seen to support an overall sacred status of the Augustae, with further divine associations being established in connection with that name.

Beyond the limited information provided by the coinage, there is simply not enough material from which to build up a picture of the scope and style of Domitilla's representation as a goddess, probably because her significance to the imperial family lapsed after the death of Titus; Domitian was far more interested in promoting his living wife and niece than his deified mother/sister, and the most significant *diva* imagery from his reign is that of Julia Titi, who was probably consecrated in 90 C.E. Despite Julia being an Augusta during her lifetime, her deification appears to have been one performed for emotional rather than political reasons: although married,

¹¹⁷ Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 46.

¹¹⁸ **Figure 28.**

¹¹⁹ **Figure 27** Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 228-230.

and potentially a mother of imperial heirs in life, her death rendered her dynastically irrelevant.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, she is heralded as a goddess not only on the coinage, but also in religious inscriptions outside Rome and in a panegyric poem by Martial, published after her consecration.¹²¹ As with Drusilla, Claudia and Domitilla the Younger, there was little direct political benefit for Domitian in consecrating Julia, though this act did represent a form of overt familial piety.

Domitia Longina was the only Flavian Augusta who was not also deified; by outliving her husband who was the last emperor of his dynasty, she was not in a position to be a useful or relevant goddess to his successors. However, her public image and reputation did acquire various divine and semi-divine honours and associations throughout her lifetime. The most important of these was the title *Mater Divi Caesaris* (“Mother of the Deified Caesar”, which acknowledged her son who would have been, had he lived beyond infancy, the emperor after Domitian.¹²² Other honours followed in the tradition of Livia and Agrippina, Domitia’s predecessors as Augustae and imperial wives, both of whom been represented as goddesses in the East during their lifetimes. Domitia wore the diadem and other divine attributes on statues and the coinage, and was heralded on coin legends and in inscriptions as Thea Sebastê.¹²³ There is also some suggestion that Domitia was worshipped alongside Domitian in temples at Laodicea and Ephesus.¹²⁴ An inscription at Termessus

¹²⁰ Indeed, this may support the argument that Diva Domitilla Augusta is the sister of Titus, as her promotion and deification is far less rational than that of his mother.

¹²¹ *RIC II Domitian* 219-220, 400, 411; *BMC II Domitian* 471-473; Martial, *Epig.* 6.13; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 7.

¹²² *RIC II Dom.* 440-443; see page 155 of this thesis.

¹²³ **Figure 36**; IG 12.1.995; Varner, “Domitia Longina,” p. 200; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 84-85; Hahn, *Die Frauen*, pp. 239-241, pp. 359-362.

¹²⁴ Varner, “Domitia Longina,” pp. 200-201.

actually refers to a priestess of the goddess Augusta Domitia.¹²⁵ While the primary focus of most religious associations made with the Augusta of Rome is her role as a mother or potential mother of heirs, this representation of Domitia in the East does demonstrate that there were specific sacred associations surrounding the imperial wife that were independent from her actual or potential maternity. This was, however, specific to her representation (and that of other imperial wives) in the East: within Rome itself, the maternal aspects of each imperial wife and Augusta are all-important. Julia Titi's deification is a rare exception to this, and she was the last of the *Divae Augustae* to be presented without maternal imagery and concerns, though she was by no means the last childless *Augustae* to be deified.

Marciana, Matidia and Plotina, the first three of the Trajanic-Hadrianic *Augustae* to be deified, are all presented as maternal goddesses. Of these three *Augustae*, only Plotina had been an imperial wife. Marciana was the sister of Trajan, and her daughter Matidia was the mother-in-law of Hadrian. Marciana's post-consecration coinage includes a coin with the legend *Matidia Aug. Divae Marcianae F*, which is clearly using the deification of Marciana to promote the public and sacred status of her daughter Matidia, who received the title *Augusta* upon her mother's death.¹²⁶ One *Pietas Aug.* reverse type for this coin issue represents an altar, implying that either formally or informally, Matidia was responsible for her mother's cult.¹²⁷ Another reverse type, also dedicated to *Pietas Aug.*, depicts Matidia herself, possibly in the guise of *Pietas*, holding the hands of two children who might be her daughters. This reiterates Matidia's maternal status as well as that of her deified mother.

¹²⁵ IGR 3.444; Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 84; Hahn, *Die Frauen*, p. 360.

¹²⁶ *RIC II Trajan* 758; *BMC III Trajan* 6, 659-664, 1088-1089.

¹²⁷ *RIC II Trajan* 758; *BMC III Trajan* 658; Bickerman, "Diva Augusta Marciana," p. 366.

After Matidia's death and deification, her *diva* coinage is noticeably similar to that of her mother, and includes the *Pietas August.* reverse types that were used in her lifetime; the maternal imagery of these would have had an added significance under Hadrian, because Diva Matidia was the mother of Sabina, wife of the new emperor.¹²⁸ As the mother-in-law of Hadrian, Matidia also received gladiatorial games and other ceremonies honouring her, including a largesse of spices given to the people; this is very similar to an offering made in Trajan's name, whereby balsam and saffron were poured over the seats of the theatre.¹²⁹ Given the lack of public promotion of Sabina herself at this time, the excess displayed in the *diva* imagery of Matidia is most likely because of her personal status as Augusta rather than her position as imperial mother-in-law. Indeed, Plotina, who is posthumously acknowledged as Hadrian's mother, has far less of a substantial public image as a *diva*.

Indeed, there is little mention at all of Plotina's deification in the usual sources; both the *Historia Augusta* and Dio refer to a basilica established by Hadrian in Plotina's honour, and yet neither of them document an actual consecration, or note the offerings or festivities surrounding such an event.¹³⁰ The only official evidence as to Plotina's deification is a coin type of the mint of Rome that presents Plotina and Trajan as *Divis Parentibus*.¹³¹ This lack of supporting literary evidence for Plotina's deification may suggest that the official consecration did not in fact take place, and that the *Divis Parentibus* coin refers only to an honorary status as a goddess. More likely, however, is that the fact that Plotina was already an Augusta when she died,

¹²⁸ *RIC II Trajan* 751-757, 423a-427; *BMC III Hadrian* 328-332.

¹²⁹ *Hist. Aug. Hadrian* 9.9, 19.5.

¹³⁰ *Hist. Aug. Hadrian* 12.2; Dio 69.10.3.

¹³¹ **Figure 40**; *RIC II Hadrian* 387.

and was officially named as the mother of Hadrian, meant that her deification was taken for granted by the writers of the time. Unlike the far more difficult question of Julia Domna, dealt with later in this chapter, there is no reason why Plotina should not have been deified. As with the presentation of Flavia Domitilla and Vespasian as the divine parents of Titus,¹³² the deification of Plotina provides Hadrian with the double benefit of claiming descent from two gods, and overtly demonstrating his familial pietas by commemorating his divine parents. The *Divis Parentibus* coin type demonstrates that Hadrian felt that this was important to his public image.

With Sabina, wife of Hadrian, we finally see an Augusta who was also an imperial wife being deified and commemorated as a *diva* to a substantial degree, in a manner not seen since the Julio-Claudians. Like Plotina, Sabina was a childless *diva*, and yet maternity played a role in her post-consecration imagery. Indeed, Mattingly and Sydenham suggest that it is possible that Sabina was deified, not by her widower Hadrian, but by his successor Antoninus, who claimed Sabina as his “mother” even though he had been adopted by her husband several years after her death.¹³³

Epigraphical evidence shows that Sabina was worshipped both in her own right and at imperial shrines along with Hadrian and other deified imperial women of the period, particularly her mother Matidia Augusta.¹³⁴ The image of a new *diva* being carried into the sky on the back of a peacock, which had been used to commemorate the consecration of Julia Titi, was resurrected after the death and deification of Sabina. Many coins commemorating Sabina’s new status as a goddess pictured her riding a peacock, and bronze peacocks also adorned the tomb that Sabina was later to

¹³² If indeed Diva Domitilla Augusta was Titus’ mother and not his sister.

¹³³ Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC II*, p. 318, *III*, p. 3.

¹³⁴ Cresswell, *Augusta*, pp. 146-147.

share with Hadrian.¹³⁵ It may be the association of the peacocks with Sabina, more than the shared association with the Flavian Augustae, which cemented the concept that peacocks represented female apotheosis in Rome.¹³⁶

The best known artistic representation of the apotheosis of Sabina is a relief panel which depicts her being carried to heaven on the back of the winged figure of Aeternitas, who holds a burning torch; another relief from the same monument shows Hadrian reading his wife's funerary eulogy.¹³⁷ This artwork is particularly significant because it is such a strong public statement of Sabina's importance as an imperial goddess. Despite the marginalisation of Sabina as a relevant figure in the literary sources concerning Hadrian, it is clear that she was and remained after her death a vital figure in his public image and propaganda. Whether or not Antoninus was actively involved in the deification of Sabina, he was certainly able to reap the benefit of her godhood by claiming her as his mother.

The reigns of Trajan and Hadrian are significant to the development of the sacred status and image of the Augustae because all four of the Augustae of this period were deified. This would have contributed greatly to a general expectation that to be Augusta was to be a potential goddess. In the case of Diva Sabina, her post-consecration public image is more substantial and significant to the reign of Hadrian than her living public image, with her roles as wife and mother greatly emphasised in public artwork.

¹³⁵ Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, p. 109.

¹³⁶ Scott, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 48.

¹³⁷ **Figure 45.**

Like Sabina, Faustina Major died during her husband's reign, many years before his own death. Indeed, Faustina's death and deification occurred twenty years before the death of Antoninus Pius, and the celebration of Faustina as a goddess was an essential element of Antoninus Pius' familial and religious propaganda. The temple erected in Diva Faustina Augusta's honour still stands in the Forum today, and reverse types dedicated to this temple appear on some Diva Faustina coin issues.¹³⁸ Her husband's loyal commitment to her memory means that Faustina has the largest extant body of *diva* coinage. The iconography on these coins centres largely on Faustina Major's roles as wife and mother, including references to Ceres, Concordia, Juno, Fecunditas, Vesta and Venus, as well as the *puellae faustinianae*, a foundation established by her husband in Faustina's name to provide dowries for unfortunate girls.¹³⁹ The relationship between Diva Faustina and her daughter, now named Faustina Augusta, is expressed on one coin issue which is similar in nature to those commemorating Matidia Augusta as the living daughter of Diva Marciana; this promotes the sacred status of the daughter as well as the title of Augusta itself, as it portrays the daughter as successor to the mother's *Augusta* title as well as potential successor to the *Diva* title. As with Plotina and Sabina, however, while Faustina Major's maternal role continued to be important to her public representation, her most overt public image was as an imperial wife; Diva Faustina appeared on reverses of coins dedicated to her living husband as if she were a patron goddess.¹⁴⁰

Perhaps the most significant example of Faustina Major's public image was the temple that was built in her name and later re-dedicated to include her husband. This

¹³⁸ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 343, 388, 1135-1138; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 306, 339-343, 479.

¹³⁹ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 389-407, 1128-1153, 1185-1200; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 298-305, 307-331, 332-338, 459-478, 480-486, 1416-1417, 1422-1456, 1463-1478, 1526-1538, 1588-1605.

¹⁴⁰ *RIC III Antoninus Pius* 325-326, 1073a-1073d; *BMC IV Antoninus Pius* 2131.

is the first example of a deified woman being accorded her own temple upon her consecration, and that it held such a prominent position in the Forum can be seen as highly significant. The substantial posthumous and post-consecration public image of Faustina Major can be seen as further evidence of the importance that piety played in the public image of Antoninus Pius. Mattingly and Sydenham note Antoninus' keen interest in the worship of the *divi* as imperial gods, as can be seen by the strong representation of the deified Hadrian and Sabina during the early days of his reign, as well as his promotion of his wife as a *diva*.¹⁴¹ Faustina's posthumous public image was not only a strong feature of the remainder of her husband's reign, but remained important to the state after his death and deification. As with previous deified couples such as Hadrian and Sabina, Trajan and Plotina, Vespasian and Domitilla¹⁴², and Augustus and Augusta, the divine couple of Antoninus and Faustina were effectively assimilated into a single religious icon. Artistic depictions such as the relief sculpture on the base of the Column of Antoninus Pius went so far as to represent their apotheoses as simultaneous, with the two figures carried towards the heavens on the wings of a single *genius*; in fact, this formed part of an entire art programme designed to emphasise the reunion of the emperor with his wife after his own death and deification.¹⁴³ The effect of this was to present a united image of the couple as the divine parents and predecessors of the incoming imperial couple, Marcus Aurelius and Faustina Minor.¹⁴⁴

Like her mother, Faustina Minor died and was deified during her husband's reign.

Unlike her mother, Faustina Minor's public life as a living Augusta, and the artistic

¹⁴¹ Mattingly & Sydenham, *RIC III*, p. 15.

¹⁴² As previously discussed, Vespasian and Domitilla fit this pattern as the deified imperial parents of Titus only if Domitilla was in fact the mother of Titus, a fact that is still widely disputed.

¹⁴³ **Figure 49**; Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, p. 287.

¹⁴⁴ Kleiner, "Women and Family Life on Funerary Altars," p. 546.

images from during her lifetime make up the more substantial part of her public image than the posthumous images. The titles attributed to Faustina Minor as a goddess (including the epithet *Pia* and the title *Mater Castrorum*) reflect those given to her in life rather than building on her new role as a goddess.¹⁴⁵ While some of her statues present Faustina Minor with a diadem, a divine attribute commonly associated with the living as well as the deified Augusta, the majority of her portraits do not include this attribute, suggesting that divinity was of less importance to the public image of this Augusta than was an appearance of modesty and mortality. Given that Faustina Minor was the wife of an emperor for substantially longer than was her mother, is it hardly surprising that her public image should reflect her role as an imperial wife more than her role as an imperial *diva*. What is notable, however, is the distinct lack of reference to *Diva Faustina* during her son Commodus' reign. Commodus chose not to augment his own sacred status by promoting himself as the son of a goddess as well as a god. The fact that he deified Marcus Aurelius at all shows that he was not blind to the benefits of claiming divine parentage.¹⁴⁶ The importance of the Augustae as symbols of imperial femininity was also clearly understood by Commodus, who allowed the title to be given to his wife Crispina.¹⁴⁷ The most likely reason for such an absence of *Diva Faustina* in Commodus' propaganda may in fact be the effect that such a promotion would have had on the status of Commodus' sister, Lucilla. Given the powerful use of previously deified Augustae to promote and augment the sacred status of their daughters, images of *Diva Faustina* would undoubtedly have reflected positively upon her daughter, also an Augusta; given Commodus' documented antipathy towards his sister, whom he

¹⁴⁵ *RIC III M. Aurelius* 738-754, 1691-1797; *BMC IV Marcus Aurelius & Lucius Verus* 698-727.

¹⁴⁶ *Hist. Aug. Marc. Ant.* 18.2.

¹⁴⁷ Dio 72.33.1.

ultimately exiled and had executed, augmenting her sacred status along with his own would not have been a preferred option.

Under the Severans, we also see a distinct reduction in the importance of the deified Augusta. Indeed, Julia Domna, who had a powerful and highly significant sacred status, may well be the most prominent Roman goddess who was never consecrated. Despite the substantial inscriptional evidence that suggests that Julia Domna was recognised as a goddess in Athens and Carthage, there is no literary or inscriptional evidence to suggest that she was officially consecrated in Rome.¹⁴⁸ Considering that Julia Domna died after her son Caracalla and that his immediate successor Macrinus had no reason to connect himself dynastically to the Severans, this is hardly surprising. Both Elagabalus and Alexander relied on dynastic links with the Severans to bring them to power; given that their matrilineal relationship to Julia Domna was far more credible than their supposed descent from Caracalla, it might be supposed that either of them might have derived some kind of political benefit from making Julia Domna a goddess, but they both had powerful matriarchal figures enough in the shape of their mutual grandmother and respective mothers.

A small body of Diva Julia Augusta coins from the reign of Elagabalus does exist, and this was certainly enough to convince Mattingly that Julia Domna's consecration had taken place, along with the consecration of Caracalla.¹⁴⁹ Without the identifying "Domna," however, this is not enough to ascertain the actual identity of this *diva* in a dynasty full of Julias. The question remains, then, if Julia Domna was deified, why have we so little evidence to confirm this fact? The deification of the first Severan

¹⁴⁸ *PIR² Iulia Domna Augusta* 663; Beard, North, & Price, *Religions of Rome Vol I*, p. 355.

¹⁴⁹ BMC V *Elagabalus* 9; Mattingly, *BMC V* ccxiv-vi, ccxxxi.

diva was surely a useful element of propaganda, particularly as she was the wife of the deified Septimius Severus, and the two could now be presented as a united divine pair as had Antoninus and Faustina, Trajan and Plotina, or Augustus and Livia. The Severan Julias who largely controlled Rome during the reigns of Elagabalus and Alexander could have gained great personal prestige through their relationship to *Diva* Julia, as could their respective boy-emperors. Why was the consecration of the most prominent woman of this dynasty so insignificant that modern scholars can barely be certain that it happened at all?

It is clear from the absence of Julia Domna in the propaganda of Elagabalus' reign that the emperor himself (whether or not he had allowed her to be consecrated) had little interest in promoting Julia Domna's image, as a goddess or otherwise. This may be because he was more interested in promoting his own mother and grandmother Julia Soaemias and Julia Maesa, and yet this would represent a strong departure from previous attitudes towards the deified Augustae, whereby they were used to augment and promote the sacred state and public image of current Augustae. If anything, the lack of a substantial promotion of Julia Domna as a goddess under Elagabalus suggests that his mother and grandmother were not overly significant or influential to his propaganda choices.

Julia Maesa remains the only one of the Severan Julias whose deification is confirmed in the literary as well as numismatic sources; she is referred to on her coinage as *Diva Maesa Augusta*, which suggests an attempt to differentiate her from the *Diva* Julia of Elagabalus' reign. The fact that Maesa's consecration is better documented than that of Julia Domna is notable, but otherwise her public image as a

Severan family goddess is in line with the precedents set by *divae* of previous dynasties, though not as extensive as the *divae* of the adoptive and Antonine reigns. This, along with the confusion about Julia Domna's status as a goddess, suggests that the Severan period, in which women were becoming more powerful and influential in the imperial family than ever before, was not a time in which the deification of women was seen as the best way to promote them in the public sphere.

This period marks the end of the tradition of consecrating imperial men and women as Roman *divi*. Alexander Severus was consecrated as a *divus* by the senate after his death, but this act was not supported by the new emperor, Alexander's murderer Maximinus.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, Maximinus, who was establishing himself entirely without any lines of imperial ancestry or support in his favour, was aggressively against the promotion of his predecessors as Roman gods. When Maximinus ruthlessly stripped the city to provide funds for the army, he took not only funds put aside for food supply, distribution to the poor, for theatre and divine festivals, but also took all the votive offerings, statues and ornaments of worship from the temples of the gods. With the *divi*, Maximinus was even harsher, removing their *timai* (honours), a phrase that implies that their very worship was taken from them.¹⁵¹ Other evidence supports the demise of the state imperial cult at this time, including the *Arval Acta*, which record the rise of sacrificial offerings presented to the *divi* throughout the third century CE, and also the lack of such sacrifices, shortly before the Arvals themselves ceased to make their records, in the 240's CE.¹⁵² The title of *divus* became little more than an epithet used to compliment the emperor, even on coins commemorating Constantine; *diva*, on the other hand, disappeared from even inscriptional use even as

¹⁵⁰ *Hist. Aug. Alexander* 63.2.

¹⁵¹ Herodian 7.3.5; Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 357.

¹⁵² Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, p. 361, p. 364.

the title of Augusta continued to be given to the women of the Christian imperial families.¹⁵³

The peak of Augusta deifications, therefore, can be seen throughout the “adoptive” and Antonine reigns, with only vestiges remaining by the time of the Severans. While maternal themes and iconography are strongly present throughout the tradition of the *divae*, and many emperors benefited from claiming descent from a *diva* they themselves had consecrated, there was an even greater emphasis on the deified Augusta as wife. The majority of deified Augustae (as well as several Augustae who were not formally consecrated such as Antonia, Agrippina and Domitia) are paired with their equally divine husband. The primary role of the *diva* in imperial propaganda, then, is to augment the sacred status of the *divus* who is himself more significant to the propaganda of the living emperor. The representation of *divae* such as Poppaea, Marciana, Matidia, Faustina Major and Faustina Minor suggests that a deified mother is of greater significance to the public image of her daughter/s rather than son. The maternal aspect of the deified Augusta is often used to promote and augment the sacred status of the living Augusta who has “succeeded” her in that title, rather than directly affecting the public image of the next emperor.

While it was quite significant in propaganda terms to identify oneself as the son of an Augusta, it may be that it was far less relevant to be the son of a *diva*, particularly if there was a *divus* available to claim descent from. Indeed, the promotion of the living Augusta as the mother and potential mother of the emperor and his heirs is far more extensive than the promotion of the *Divae Augustae*, except in a few isolated

¹⁵³ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, pp. 364-365.

cases. To be posthumously consecrated as a *diva* was, until the Adoptive era, a rare and great honour to bestow upon a woman of the imperial family; in dynastic terms, however, the *divae* were less significant than the Augustae, and the title Augusta had a more powerful part to play in the propaganda of imperial Rome than that of Diva. While there was benefit to be gained from having a maternal relative as a “patron goddess,” the essential role for women in the imperial dynasty was to produce heirs, and a goddess could certainly not achieve this.

It seems clear that the emperors of Rome derived great benefit from the religious associations that the women of their family held. The title Augusta itself acquired substantial sacred connotations because of the religious duties, iconography and divine status of the various women who held this title over the years. A great deal of this sacred status was in some ways incidental: an effect of being the wife, mother or other close relative of the emperor, who himself had a substantial sacred status. While the sacred status of the Augustae clearly reflected well upon their children, and was often used to augment the sacred status of those children, it is clear that this sacred status was just as, if not more often used to promote the husbands of the Augustae, particularly if those husbands were emperors living, or dead.

Conclusion

The study of imperial women in past years has been driven by an assumption that the imperial wife (“empress”) automatically had a higher status than other imperial women, and was thus more significant to the state. “Augusta” has even at times been translated as “empress,” an inexact and misleading term that implies both constitutional power and a substantial automatic status granted to imperial wives.¹ This misapprehension has coloured much of the study of imperial women. Even the Oxford Latin Dictionary describes the title Augusta as primarily a title for the wife of the emperor, “and occasionally to other close female relatives.”²

This assumption about the automatic importance of the imperial wife has allowed for a marginalisation of the importance and specific significance of the title Augusta; maternity and fertility can naturally be seen as vital duties of the imperial wife, and therefore the title’s maternal connotations are hardly surprising if it was primarily intended as an honour for imperial wives. But from the very beginning, the association between the title Augusta and the imperial wife has been an incidental result of the real intention behind this title: to mark out the mothers of emperors, heirs and designated heirs. The wife of the emperor did not have the same status or significance as the mother/potential mother of the current or future emperor; indeed, most of the honours awarded to such imperial wives can be directly attributed to their

¹ e.g. Juv. *Sat.* 6.118 in which the phrase *meretrix Augusta* is translated by various scholars as “whore-empress,” or “empress harlot.” Braund, “Juvenal - Misogynist or Misogamist?” p. 76; Ramage, “Juvenal and the Establishment,” p. 678. The phrase *meretrix Augusta* is particularly strange in this context because it refers to Messalina who was certainly not an Augusta.

² “Augusta” in *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*.

maternal/potential maternal role rather than their uxorial role. The title Augusta may not have conferred constitutional power, but it did bestow other kinds of power. To be the son or daughter of an Augusta was to be a valid heir to the Roman empire, and to be an Augusta oneself was to be a vessel of imperial legitimacy.

There is no denying, however, that while the majority of Augustae did not receive the title as an imperial wife, the majority of imperial wives were given the title of Augusta. Being the wife of the Augustus certainly made a woman eligible (or appear to be eligible) for the role, though that eligibility was by no means something guaranteed to an imperial wife. While the imperial wives did not (even under the later emperors) receive any kind of definable power or status simply by marrying an emperor, the public representation of the imperial wives does imply that they had a powerful symbolic role to play beyond that which they shared with the other Augustae. The only women who received the title Augusta without being either a mother of living children or young enough to still potentially bear children were imperial wives: Domitia, Plotina and Sabina. While these women were the exception rather than the rule, the maternal imagery surrounding them (including the title of Augusta) presents these imperial wives as symbolic figures of maternity and fertility.

There is still much work to be done in the study of imperial women, particularly with those women who have not, with the Julio-Claudian era in particular, been examined by means of a wide interdisciplinary approach rather than pure “biography”. Future study of these women would benefit from making a firm distinction between the Augustae, and the imperial wives/empresses despite the overlapping information, in order to avoid making unnecessary assumptions about women in either category.



Figure 1. Confronted portraits of Antony and Octavia, obverse of sesterterius, 37-35 BCE [photo source: Wood, *Imperial Women*, fig. 9].



Figure 2. Tiberius and Livia as Ceres Augusta, sardonyx cameo, 14-29 CE (Florence, Museo Archaeologico inv. 177)

[photo source: Wood, *Imperial Women*, fig. 36].



Figure 3. Livia as Ceres/Fortuna, marble statue, 14-29 CE (Paris, Louvre, MA 1242) [photo source: Tansy Roberts, 2000].



Figure 4. Detail of Fig 3 [photo source: Wood, *Imperial Women*, fig. 38].



Figure 5. Livia as priestess of the deified Augustus, marble statue from Otricoli, 14-29 CE (Vatican Sala dei Busti inv. 637) [photo source: Wood, *Imperial Women*, fig. 37].



Figure 6. “Marlborough” turquoise of Livia and Drusus, in a composition that evokes Venus and Cupid (Boston Museum of Fine Arts) [photo source: Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, figs. 68-69].

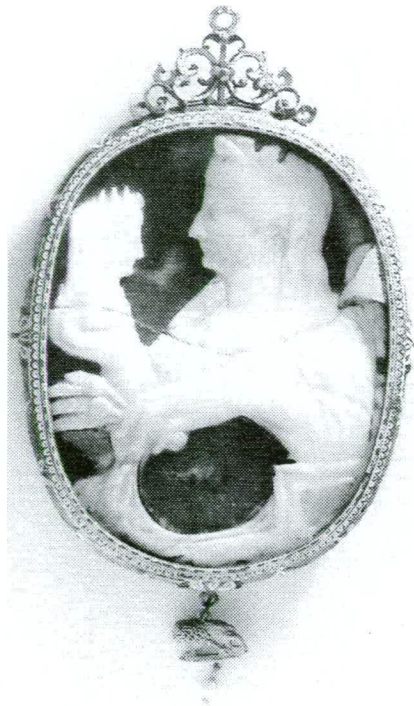


Figure 7. Livia contemplating her own portrait, sardonyx cameo (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum) [photo source: Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, fig. 79].



Figure 8. “Livia” as Salus Augusta, obverse of dupondius, mint of Rome 22-23 CE (23, Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Münzkabinett) [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate IV].



Figure 9. “Livia” as Iustitia, obverse of dupondius, mint of Rome 22-23 CE (RIC 22, Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Münzkabinett)

[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate V].



Figure 10. “Livia” as Pietas, obverse of dupondius, mint of Rome, 22-3 CE (New Haven Numismatic Collection, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University)

[photo source: Kleiner & Matheson, *I Claudia*, Cat. 10].



Figure 11. Antonia, marble statue from the imperial nymphaeum at Baia, 41-8 CE (Baia Castello Aragonese) [photo source: Wood, *Imperial Women*, fig. 64].



Figure 12. Antonia Augusta (obverse), Sacerdos Divi Augusti (reverse), denarius, mint of Rome, 41-54 CE (British Museum RE Claudius 114) [photo source: Wood, *Imperial Women*, fig. 55].



Figure 13. Antonia (obverse), Constantiae Augusti (reverse), aureus, mint of Rome, 41-54 CE (British Museum RE Claudius 109)

[photo source: Wood, *Imperial Women*, fig. 56].

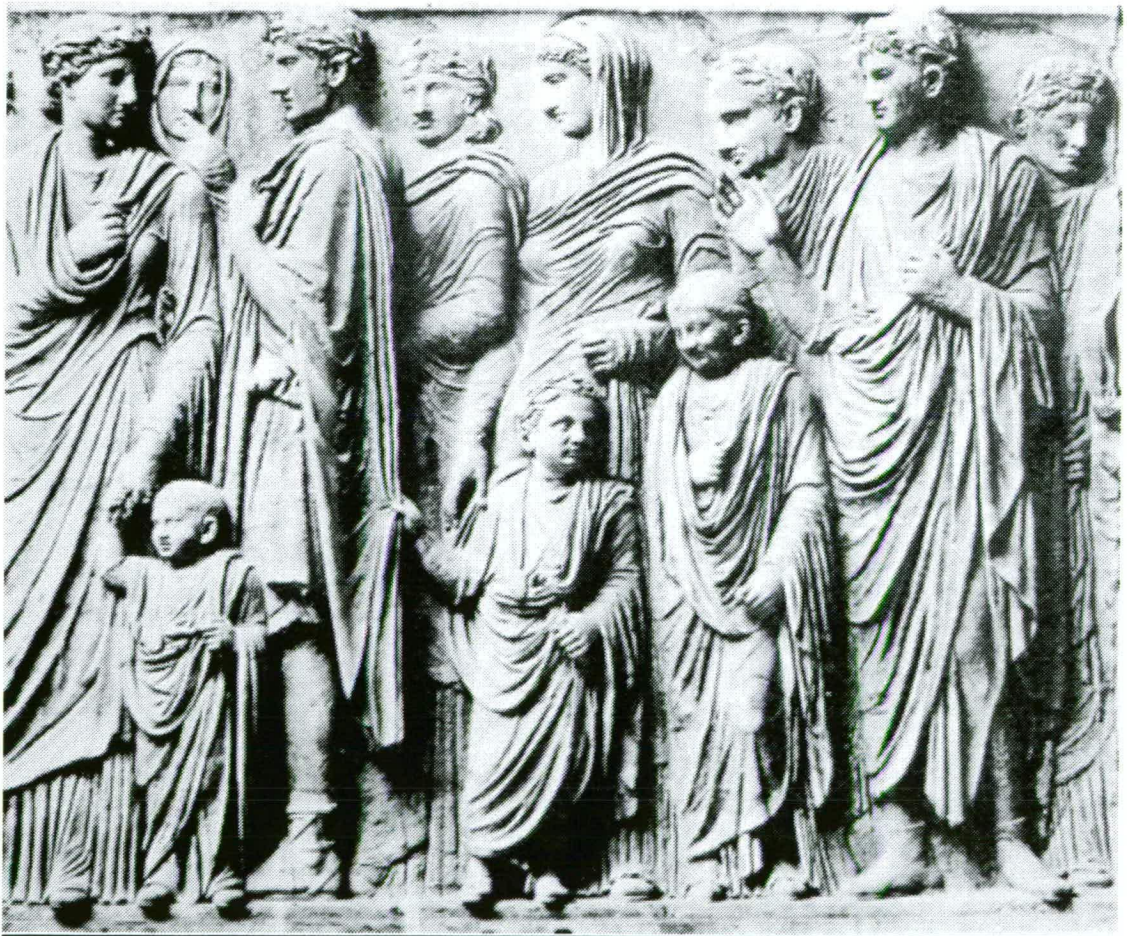


Figure 14. The imperial family during the reign of Augustus, relief sculpture on the Ara Pacis, 13 BCE. The woman at the far left has been identified as Antonia, turning towards her husband Drusus, with their small son Germanicus at their feet. [photo source: Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, fig. 47].



Figure 15. Antonia Minor, life size statue from the Old Forum of Leptis Magna, 23 CE [photo source: Wood, *Imperial Women*, fig. 59].



Figure 16. The sisters of Caligula: Agrippina Minor, Drusilla and Julia Livilla, sesterce, mint of Rome, 37-38 CE [photo source: Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, plate 20].



Figure 17. Agrippina Major (obverse) and the *carpentum* (reverse), memorial sestertius from the reign of Caligula, 37-41 CE [photo source: Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, fig. 56].

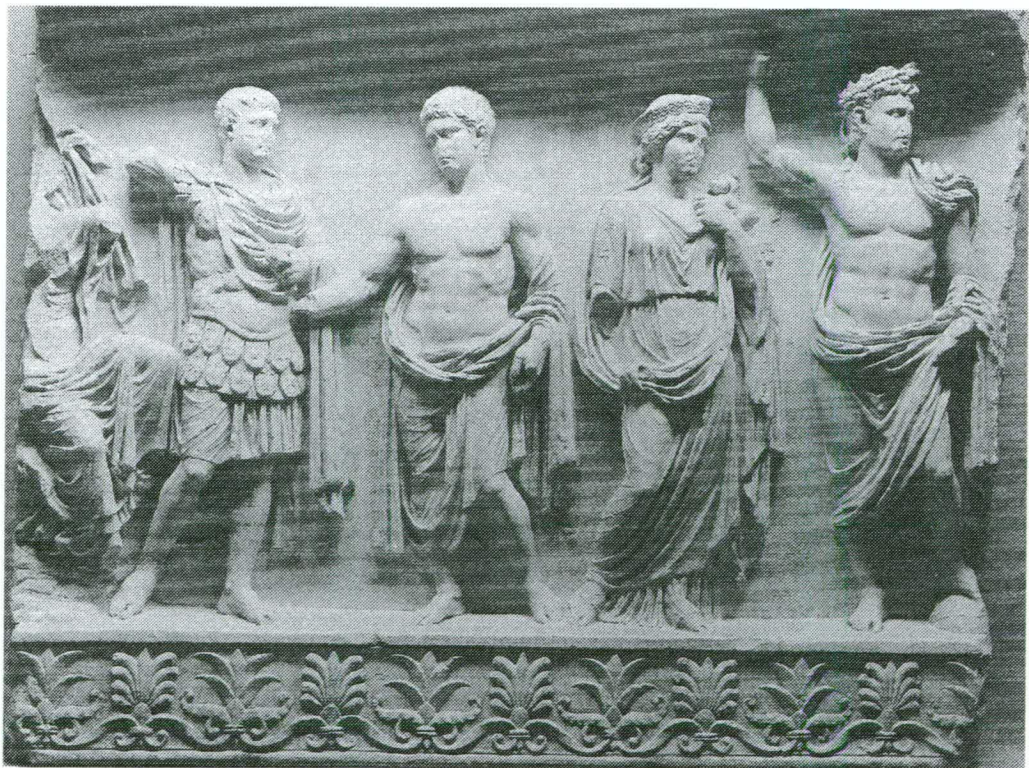


Figure 18. Claudian family group, relief sculpture (National Museum, Ravenna) [photo source: Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, fig. 98].



Figure 19. “Gemma Claudia” marriage cameo of Claudius and Agrippina, depicting portraits of the bridal couple facing her parents Germanicus and Agrippina Major, 50 CE (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum) [photo source: Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, fig. 127].



Figure 20. Claudius (obverse), Agrippina (reverse), aureus, mint of Rome 51-54 CE (RIC 92) [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XII].

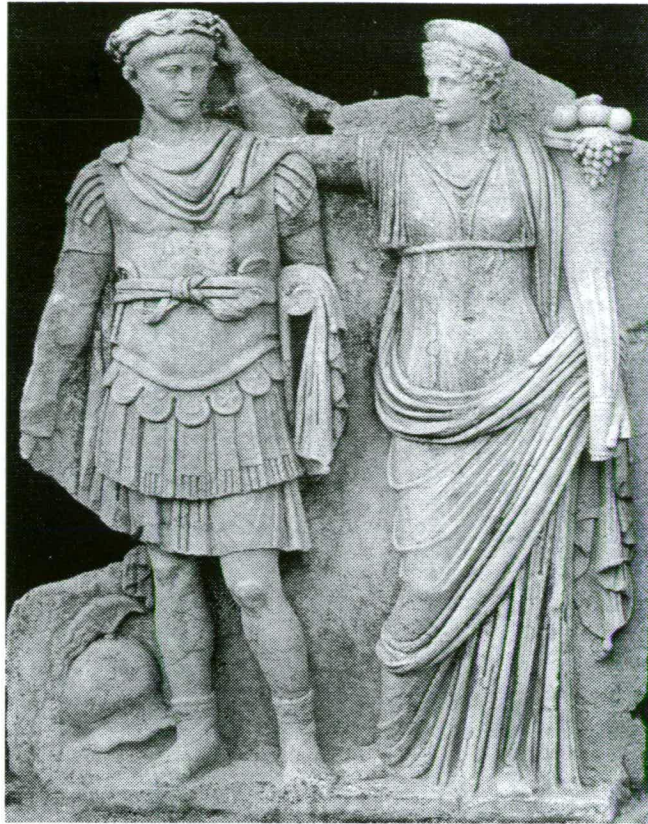


Figure 21. Agrippina Minor placing a crown upon the head of her son Nero, relief sculpture panel from the Sebasteion of Aphrodisias, probably 54-55 CE (Aphrodisias Museum) [photo source: Wood, *Imperial Women*, fig. 142].



Figure 22. Agrippina Minor as priestess, statue (Velleia, Museo Nazionale di Antichita, Parma) [photo source: Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, plate 148].



Figure 23. Nero and Poppaea, obverse of denarius with the legend *Augustus Augusta*, mint of Rome, 64-5 CE (*RIC I Nero* 41)

[photo source: Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, plate 37].



Figure 24. Poppaea, obverse of drachma, unknown mint of Asia Minor after 63 CE (Hunter Collection 13)

[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XVII].



Figure 25. Diva Poppaea seated in a temple, reverse of bronze coin featuring Nero, 65 CE (Caesarea Paneas/Syria)

[photo source: Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, plate 38].



Figure 26. Diva Claudia standing in a temple, reverse of Fig. 25

[photo source: Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration*, plate 39].



Figure 27. Divus Vespasian and Diva Domitilla, aureus from the reign of Titus, 79-81 CE [photo source: Wegner, *Die Flavier*, Tafel 51].



Figure 28. Domitilla Augusta, remnant of statue, probably from the reign of Titus 79-81 CE [photo source: Wegner, *Die Flavier*, Tafel 51].



Figure 29. Julia, daughter of the emperor Titus, dupondius, mint of Rome, 79-81 CE (BMC II Titus 144, RIC 180) [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XX].



Figure 30. Julia Titi, statue, 80-81 CE (Rome, Museo Nazionale delle Terme) [photo source Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, fig. 147].



**Figure 31. Julia Titi, cameo portrait (Paris, Cabinet des Medailles)
[photo source: Wegner, *Die Flavier*, Tafel 47].**



Figure 32. Julia Titi with diadem, portrait bust, probably posthumous (Rome, Vatican) [photo source: Wegner, *Die Flavier*, Tafel 47].



Figure 33. Domitia Augusta, statue, probably from the reign of Vespasian or Titus as she appears without a diadem. (Leningrad)
[photo source: Wegner, *Die Flavii*, Tafel 55].

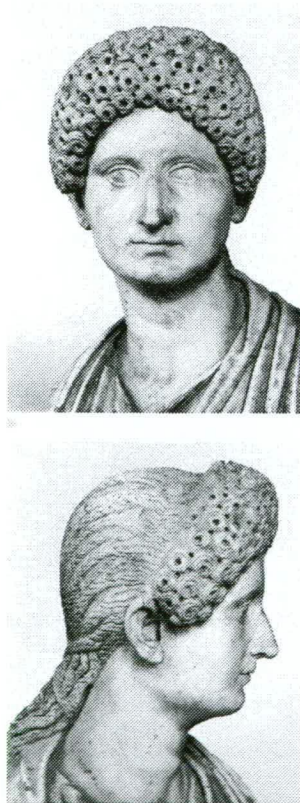


Figure 34. Domitia, portrait bust, probably from the reign of Vespasian. (Museo Capitolino) [photo source: Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafel 80, Nr. 63].

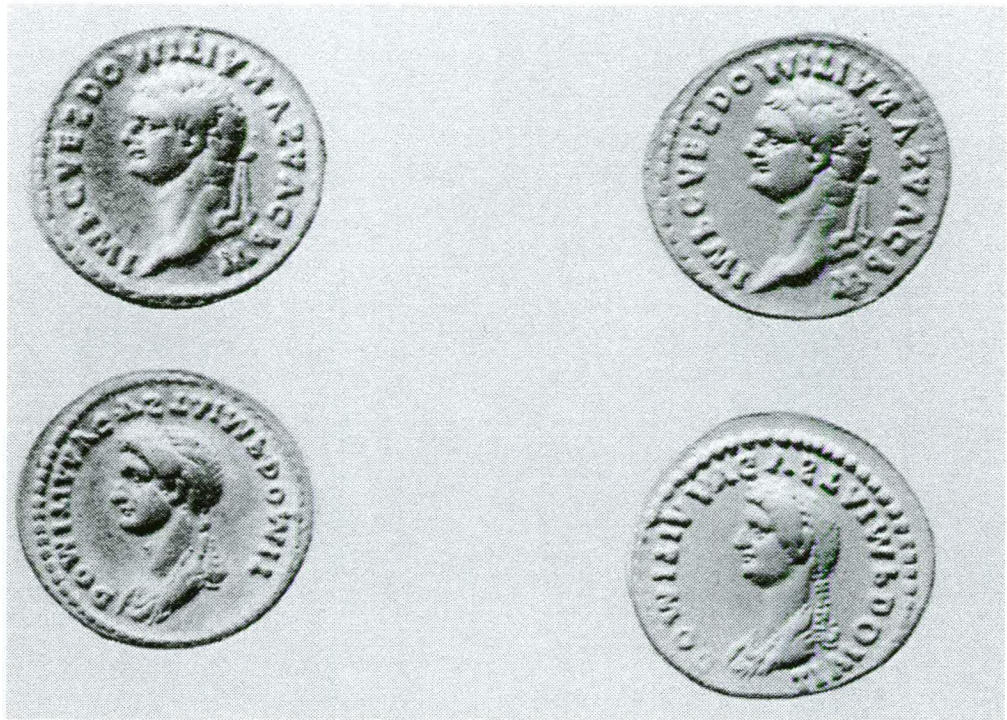


Figure 35. Domitian and Domitia Augusta, displaying a familial resemblance to each other, aurei, mint of Rome, 79-81 CE

[photo source: Wegner, *Die Flavier*, Tafel 59].

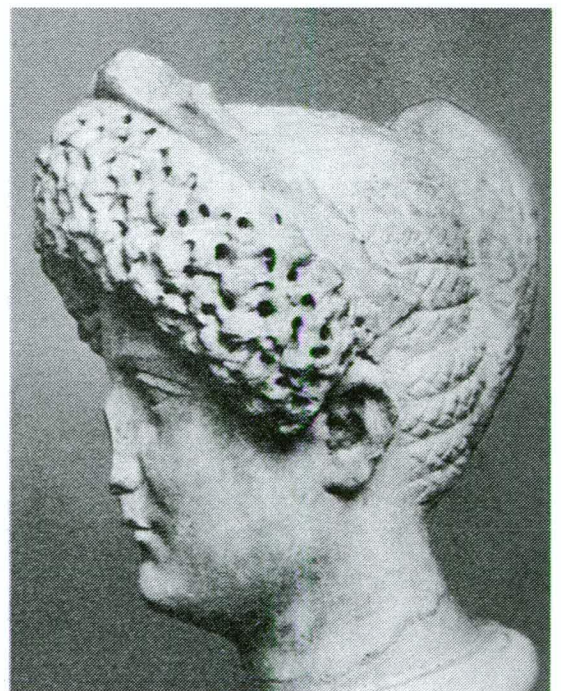
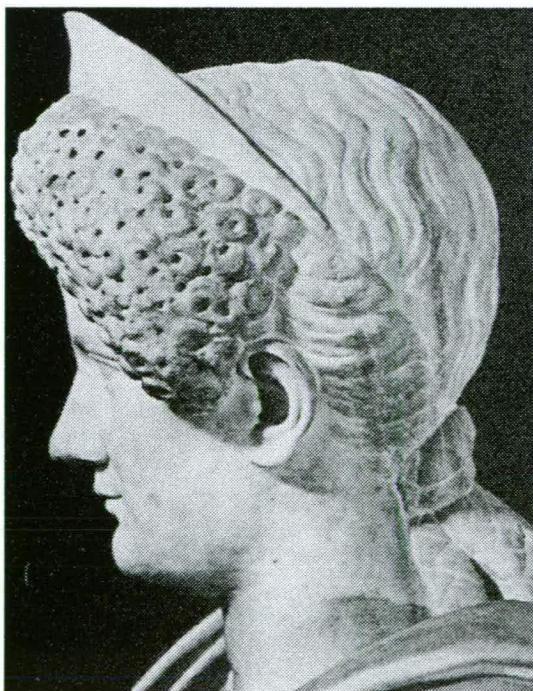


Figure 36. Domitia Augusta wearing a diadem, statues from the reign of Domitian, (a – Florenz, Galleria degli Uffizi, b – Paris, Louvre)

[photo source: Wegner, *Die Flavier*, Tafel 54]



Figure 37. Trajan, aureus, mint of Rome, 113-117 CE
[photo source: Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, fig. 94].



Figure 38. Plotina, aureus, mint of Rome, 113-7 CE (RIC 730)
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XXII].



Figure 39. Plotina, statue from the reign of Trajan. (Museo Capitolino)
 [photo source: Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafel 9, Text 7].



Figure 40. Trajan and Plotina as Hadrian's "divine parents," coin from the reign of Hadrian [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, fig XV].



Figure 41. Marciana, portrait bust, approx. 100 CE
[photo source: Kleiner & Matheson, *I Claudia*, fig. 21].



Figure 42. Marciana, denarius, mint of Rome, approx. 114-7 CE (RIC 745)
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, fig. XXIII].

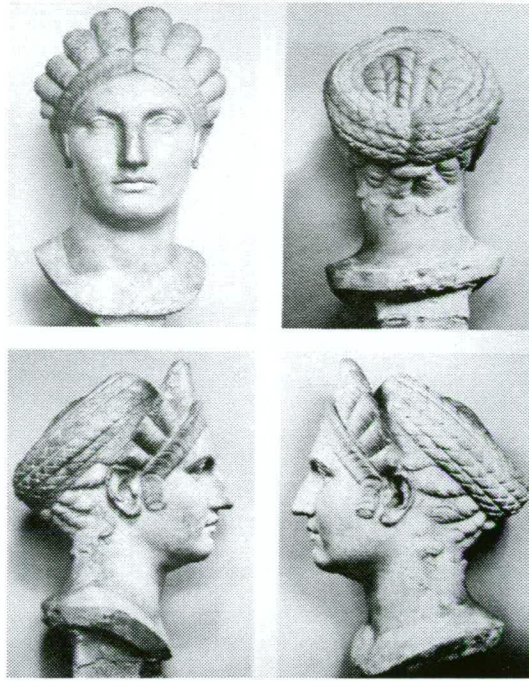


Figure 43. Matidia, statue, from the reign of Hadrian. (Museo del Palazzo dei Conservatori) [photo source: Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafel 10 Text 8].



Figure 44. Matidia, aureus, mint of Rome, approx. 114-7 CE (RIC 759)
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, fig. XXIV].



Figure 45. Apotheosis of Sabina, relief sculpture, 136-8 CE (Museo del Palazzo dei Conservatori) [photo source: Matheson, “The Divine Claudia,” fig. 6].



Figure 46. Sabina, larger than life statue, early 120's CE (from the theatre of Vasio, paired with a statue of Hadrian)

[photo source: Boatwright, “Just Window Dressing,” fig. 4.7].



**Figure 47. Sabina, statue, approx. 140 CE (Musei Capitolini, Rome)
[photo source: Kleiner & Matheson, *I Claudia*, fig. 23].**



**Figure 48. Sabina as Ceres, life-sized statue (possibly posthumous), Parian
marble, 137 CE (from the Baths of Neptune in Ostia)
[photo source: Boatwright, “Just Window Dressing,” fig. 4.8].**



Figure 49. Apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina Major, relief panel from the pedestal of the Column of Antoninus Pius, 161 CE (Vatican Museums, Cortile della Corraze) [photo source: Matheson, “The Divine Claudia,” (fig. 7)].



Figure 50. Faustina Major as Concordia, posthumous statue (Museo Capitolino) [photo source: Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafel 20 Text 16].

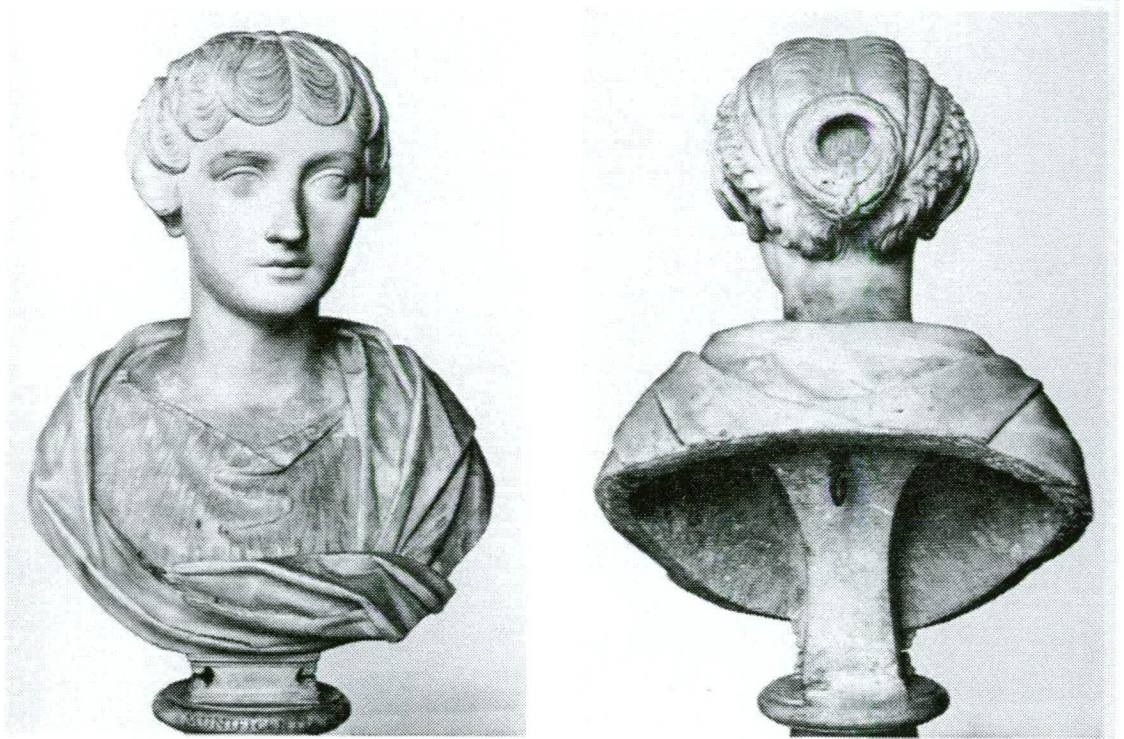


Figure 51. Faustina Minor, statue, 147-148 CE (Museo Capitolino)
[photo source: Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafels 24-26, Text 19].



Figure 52. Faustina Minor, portrait bust (Museo Capitolino)
[photo source: Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafels 29-30 Text 21].



Figure 53. Lucilla, statue. (Berlin Staatliche Museen) [photo source: Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina minor*, Tafel 48.3].



Figure 54. Lucilla, daughter of Marcus Aurelius, aureus, mint of Rome, 161-80 CE (RIC 774) [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XXXIII].



Figure 55. Crispina Augusta, aureus, mint of Rome, 180-185 CE (RIC 285)
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XXXIV].



Figure 56. Manlia Scantilla, aureus, mint of Rome, between 28 March-1 June 193 CE (RIC 7a) [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XXXVI].



Figure 57. Didia Clara, aureus, mint of Rome, between 28 March-1 June 193 CE (RIC 10) [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XXXVII].



Figure 58. Julia Domna, Septimius Severus, Geta (face obscured) and Caracalla, painted wooden tondo from Egypt, 200 CE (Berlin Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung) [photo source: Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, fig. 284].



Figure 59. Septimius Severus and Julia Domna at sacrifice (image of Geta removed), relief sculpture detail from the Gate of the Argentarii, Rome, 204 CE [photo source: Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, fig. 170]. *Note: a matching panel to this one depicts Caracalla, originally with Plautianus and Plautilla at either side of him, though their portraits have also been removed.*



Figure 60. Julia Domna with attributes of Ceres, statue, 193-210 CE (Museo Capitolino) [photo source: Fittschen & Zanker, *Katalog*, Tafel 38, Nr 28].



Figure 61. Julia Domna, aureus, mint of Rome, after 198 CE (RIC 540)
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XXXIX].



Figure 62. Jugate busts of Septimius Severus and Julia Domna (reverse of an aureus dedicated to Caracalla) mint of Rome, 201 CE (RIC 52)
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XXXVIII].

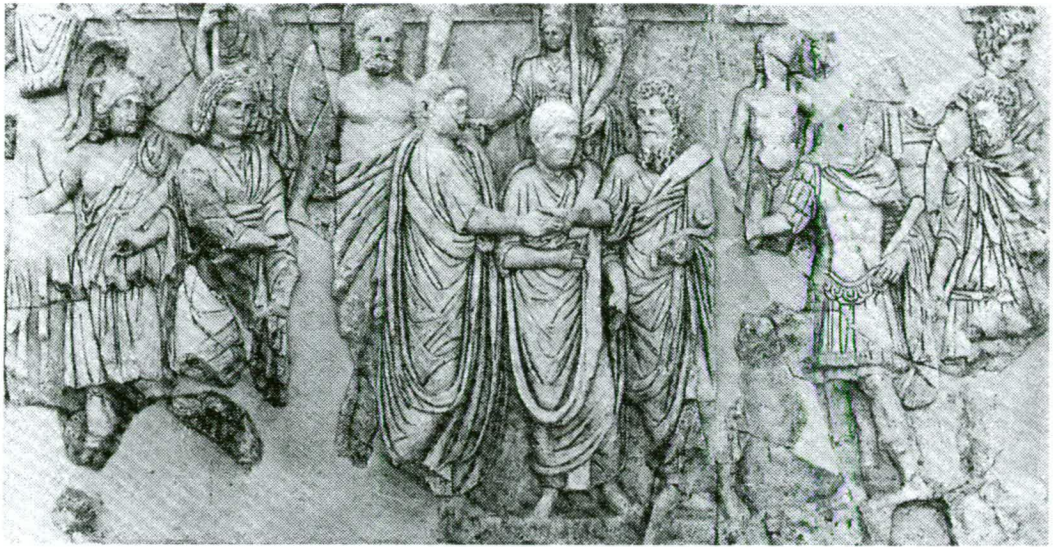


Figure 63. Concordia and the Severan family, panel of relief sculpture at Leptis Magna [photo source: Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy*, fig. 168].



Figure 64. Plautilla, denarius, mint of Rome 202-205 CE (RIC 363 b) [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XLII].



Figure 65. Plautilla, marble portrait head of belonging to a type from 202-3 CE (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas) [photo source: Vermeule, *Greek and Roman Sculpture*, fig. 308]. *Note: this portrait has also been identified as Julia Paula, wife of Elagabalus.*



Figure 66. Julia Maesa, sestertertius, mint of Rome, 218-22 CE (RIC 414) [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XLIV].



Figure 67. Julia Soaemias, denarius, mint of Rome, 218-22 CE (RIC 243)
 [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XLV].



Figure 68. Julia Paula, denarius, mint of Rome, approx. 219-20 CE (RIC 211)
 [photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XLVI].



Figure 69. Aquilia Severa, sestertertius, mint of Rome 220-22 CE (RIC 390)
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XLVII].



Figure 70. Annia Faustina, sestertertius, mint of Rome approx. 221 CE (RIC 399)
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XLVII].



Figure 71. Julia Mamaea draped and winged, wearing a diadem decorated with grain ears and a lotus, holding a cornucopia and a torch ornamented with grain ears, crescent moon appearing behind her, bronze medallion struck at Rome in 228 CE (BMC 537)

[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate XLVIII].



Figure 72. Pulcheria Augusta, sister of Theodosius II.
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate LXVIII].



Figure 73. Eudocia Augusta, wife of Theodosius II
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate LXIX].



Figure 74. Licinia Eudoxia Augusta, daughter of Theodosius II
[photo source: Giacosa, *Women of the Caesars*, plate LXX].

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