Accessories to Power: Imperial Women’s Dress, Adornments, and Attributes in Art and Text

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the use of accessories, namely adornments and attributes, in the imagery of imperial women from Livia to Julia Soaemias in literary and visual sources. Sartorial accessories were an important means of distinguishing an individual’s place and behaviour within Roman society. Although Roman women did not possess particular items which denoted rank in the same manner that men did, their attire was still treated, especially in literature, as a means of distinguishing one type of woman from another – frequently chaste, austere matrons from women that were frivolous and dissolute in their morals. Jewellery was one particular type of accessory which garnered a great deal of interest from Roman writers, who often associated it with women who acted in a manner that transgressed social expectations, either by lacking fidelity (to their husbands or to the state), or by favouring fashion over their traditional duties. However close reading of texts, especially imperial biographies such as Suetonius’s *Lives* and the *Historia Augusta*, reveals that jewellery and similar adornment was mentioned in relation to imperial women in a number of contexts that did not always portray the wearer in a negative fashion. By drawing upon various topoi which involved jewellery and clothing more generally, writers could characterise not only the woman who was thus adorned, but invariably also the emperor with whom she was associated.

A survey of sculpted portraits also shows that here jewellery was perceived in a positive light and served to exalt the woman depicted. Previous studies have explained the presence of jewellery in imperial portraits as either being realistic portrayals of costume, or a representation of the wealth (and thus social capital) that the woman possessed. They also claim that both of these possibilities were, by necessity, generally restricted to a private viewership. However, an examination of the evidence raises another possibility. The constant presence of divine attributes in conjunction with jewellery on glyptic portraits indicates that jewellery in imperial portraits was intended to liken these women to goddesses, who were also represented as being adorned. Moreover, the connotations of fertility and maternity of many of these attributes could mean that jewellery was also intended to emphasise and complement their presence, especially since several of these portraits show women wearing an amulet which might represent a fertility charm.

As imperial women were often shown holding divine attributes, their purpose and employment was also investigated. It was concluded that attributes functioned as visual metaphors, through which imperial women were depicted as having qualities similar to the goddesses who also bore the attribute. The study also shows that in this context attributes were not applied to imperial women in the same schema as they were on representations of goddesses. Instead this could be altered,
through omission of certain elements or the addition of others, in order to best suit the context in which the woman was depicted. This thesis will demonstrate that accessories were effective elements in constructing representations of imperial women in art and text.
Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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No contributions by others.

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None.
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List of Abbreviations used in the Thesis

The majority of abbreviations used for ancient authors and their works are listed in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn. 1966: xxix-liv (available online). The following abbreviations for modern works are also used throughout this thesis.


Introduction

The imperial women of Rome - the wives, mothers, and daughters of the emperors – have long been a topic of scholarly interest in their own right. Alongside a growing interest in the role of dress within Roman society, questions concerning the attire of imperial women have begun to appear in works focussed on empresses as well as those investigating the dress of Roman women in general. What did these women wear? A more fruitful question might be: what were the imperial women represented as wearing? The role of dress in constructing portraits of emperors has already been the subject of discussion by Wallace-Hadrill (1982) and Harlow (2005). An equivalent study concerning the imperial women is needed.

Previous Research

The representation of imperial women, in itself, is not a neglected area of study. Bartman, with _Portraits of Livia: Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome_ (1999) and Wood, with _Imperial Women: A Study in Images, 30 BC – AD 68_ (1999) provide extensive analyses of the appearance of imperial women in visual culture. Critically, these works are not restricted to simply describing these images or grouping them on typological grounds. They have also sought to explain the purpose of imperial women’s portraiture within Roman society, and the methods through which these portraits cast the women in the roles of ideal wives and mothers. Both works acknowledge that attire was a potent element in such images, especially the practice of portraying imperial women with divine attributes. This has also been addressed by Mikocki in his comprehensive work _Sub Specie Deae: Les Impératrices et Princesses Romaines Assimilées à des Déeses_ (1995). As valuable as these works are, however, there is an element of imperial portraiture that has yet to receive sufficient attention. A number of portraits show the imperial women wearing jewellery, mainly necklaces and earrings. Additionally, there are several passages in literature featuring the imperial women interacting with jewellery and other accessories. Investigating these along with the divine attributes that appear in sculptural representations of the imperial women will be the focus of this thesis. As Roman society attached a great deal of importance to such objects as indicators of status and morality, an examination of their use in this context provides greater insight into both the representation of imperial women and the potential for such accessories as a means of articulating their role within Roman society.

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It is impossible to understand the significance of the imperial women’s accessories without also considering Roman attitudes to female attire and adornment as a whole. Fortunately, there have been a number of works produced in the past two decades on this very issue. For dress in general, Sebesta (2001) provides a compendium, sourced primarily from classical texts, of the attire of Roman women throughout the different stages of their lives. In contrast, Olson (2008) seeks to understand their attire as an expression of personal status and aspiration which was in turn criticised by elite Roman men, using mainly visual evidence and focusing on the adornment which was censured in literature. Harlow (2012) also emphasises the potential for self-representation in women’s attire. Both approaches are valuable to our understanding of Roman dress. Although literary and visual evidence might have presented a picture that was quite different from the reality experienced by most women, the study of dress history is as much about what people thought about their own and other’s clothing as it is about how it was actually worn. Such a method of characterising and differentiating between women based upon what they wore is valuable information when it comes to analysing their appearance in art and text.

**Background**

As previously mentioned, the Romans imbued their dress accessories with specific connotations. For Roman men, clothing was seen as a means of distinguishing between social ranks and roles, and rings were especially potent symbols.\(^2\) The gold ring (anulus aurea) worn by men of the equestrian order, and the iron ring of slaves are focal points of Pliny the Younger’s invective against Pallas, a freedman who attained unprecedented levels of influence and prestige during the reign of Claudius. Already incensed by the discovery of a monument to Pallas which bore the inscription ‘To him the senate decreed in return for his loyal services to his patrons, the insignia of a praetor…’\(^3\) Pliny wrote a second letter on this matter to Montanus, expounding on the outrage he felt:

> I say nothing of this offer of the praetorian insignia to a slave, for they were slaves themselves who made the offer, nothing of the resolution that he should not only be begged but even compelled to wear a gold ring (it would lower the prestige of the senate for a praetorian to wear the slave’s iron one)…\(^4\)

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\(^2\) Hawley 2007, especially 107-8.


The elevated status of Pallas was reflected in his change of costume, but his ignoble origins were betrayed by the wearing of an iron ring and thus this had to be replaced. Pliny is caustically sarcastic in his evaluation of the rationale behind this decision. He chose to illustrate the change in Pallas’s fortunes not by detailing his actions or his clients, but by invoking the standards of correct costume - in other words, that which was in keeping with an individual’s status in society. The senate, cowed by Pallas’s greater power, sought to grant this some legitimacy by cladding him with items which possessed this meaning. However, to Pliny, Pallas’s power could never be legitimate, and so for him to wear emblems that proclaimed otherwise was a travesty. The controversy of this decision was due to the subservience of the senate to a former slave, which was symbolised – but not actualised – by his misappropriation of an established social signifier.

The background context of men’s rings as a marker of rank make an analysis of the preceding passage straightforward. However, not all such accessories had such unquestionable meanings assigned to them, nor an unquestionable purpose. For some Roman writers, accessories that served no purpose except that of personal adornment indicated that the wearer was profligate, vain, and worst of all, effeminate. This last indictment arose from the belief that such ornamentation was akin to how women adorned themselves with jewellery and extravagant clothing for no reason beyond the desire to show off their wealth (or that of their husbands, or lovers), or from misguided attempts to improve their physical beauty. Women’s accessories did not denote their social rank in the same way that men’s did. Social markers for women were intended to designate their marital status (which of course had implications as to their freed or freeborn status) but, wealth permitting, a freedwoman could technically wear the same outfit as a woman of equestrian or senatorial family. Pliny the Elder derides women who wore a certain amount of gold as attempting to establish their own equivalent to the equestrian order with its gold ring – something that to him is clearly absurd. In Livy’s recounting of Valerius Flaccus’s speech supporting the repeal of the lex Oppia, he characterises the competitive display of jewellery and fine clothing as a consolation prize for women, who were barred from the political arena. To these writers adornment was a marker of political inaction and irrelevance, and so something that was peculiarly feminine.

Additionally, there was a recurring, and often related, theme in Roman literature that women’s adornment, especially jewellery, was a betrayal of the traditional values to which women were

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6 Plin. HN. 33.12.

7 Livy 34.7.

8 Wyke 1994: 139-140.
expected to adhere. For several writers it was emblematic of the vices of *luxuria* and *avaritia*, both of which posed dire threats to the welfare and security of the state. Although the misappropriation of the golden ring that demarcated men of the equestrian order drew the ire of those who felt that their standing was being degraded, and by extension the whole of Roman society, the majority of commentary passed on jewellery concerned that which was worn by women. A mistrust of jewellery and women alike resulted in the combination of the two being cast as the catalyst for weakened defenses against external enemies.\(^9\) As historians tended to reference the behaviour of Rome’s women as a barometer for the health of the state itself, periods of strife were populated by women who had forsaken their traditional roles and morals. The role of jewellery in this deterioration took on several aspects. First, the loyalty of women could easily be bought by baubles. Thus in Livy’s reconstruction of the debate over the repeal of the *lex Oppia*, Valerius Flaccus’s opponent Cato the Elder claims that the women of his own time, who were accustomed to wearing jewels and fine clothes, would have welcomed the bribes of Perseus gladly, while their austere forebears rejected them and thus maintained Rome against the Macedonian threat.\(^10\) On a less grand scale, Roman comedy, satire and love elegy is peppered with references to the inconstancy of a lover’s affections when such ornaments are made available to her, as expressed by Juvenal:

> There is nothing that a woman will not permit herself to do, nothing that she deems shameful, when she encircles her neck with green emeralds, and fastens huge pearls to her elongated ears: there is nothing more intolerable than a wealthy woman.\(^11\)

Second, the mania for gems and gold led women to neglect or even completely reject their expected duties – the bearing and raising of children. So Valerius Maximus recounts how Cornelia made a fool of a woman boasting about her jewels by turning her attention towards her sons, and Seneca the Younger is vitriolic against women who prefer to maintain their figure for fashion rather than have it altered by pregnancy.\(^12\) Naturally his own mother did not care for such things, and she receives due praise.

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\(^9\) Sallust’s Sempronia, the most infamous ‘bad woman’ in Republican history and abetter of Catiline’s attempted coup, is not mentioned in conjunction with jewellery at all. Her vices were of a different nature (Sall. *B. Cat.* 25). Moreover, although the rest of the women involved in the conspiracy were said to have been tempted by the promised abolition of debts, the purpose for which they had taken out these loans is not mentioned. I believe that jewellery is particularly linked to foreign attempts on Rome due to the perception of it as alien to Roman society. It does not appear in all accounts of Rome being under threat.

\(^10\) Livy 34. 4.

\(^11\) Juv. 6.457-460; Olson 2008: 84.

Investigation

The combination of these two issues – the difficulty of ascribing meaning to women’s jewellery, and the negative portrayals of those who wore it – has resulted in an underutilisation of it as evidence for studying representations of women, especially in art. The existence of portraits which depict women without jewellery has attracted more attention. There appear to be several reasons for this. The first is that this unadorned look is perceived as a derivation from the norm, and thus is in need of explanation, while the inclusion of jewellery is a natural extension of textual references to its use. Second, the absence of jewellery is in accordance with accounts of exemplary women who eschewed such frivolity – and perhaps more importantly, provided an antithesis to women whose greed for jewels superseded their loyalty to Rome. Therefore, since it is assumed to be a deliberate choice to portray a woman without jewellery, it follows that this decision was made in accordance with the concerns expressed in literature about the dangers of female adornment. \(^{13}\) Rather than face the risk of associating the subject of the portrait with women who were castigated for their interest in jewellery, it was preferable to follow the model of Cornelia and other virtuous matrons. The apparent dichotomy between the modest ideal and aberrations from it especially in visual culture has posed something of a problem to scholars. One approach to resolving this issue has been to consider such incidents as being, to some degree, removed from this dominant discourse and instead situated within a sphere that was more concerned with women’s own positive perceptions of adornment and its use for self-actualisation. \(^{14}\) However this poses further issues. How can we be certain that all items which depicted women in this way were solely (or even just primarily) intended for female consumption? The examples which pertain to imperial women were probably viewed just as often by men as they were by women. There must be another reason why jewellery was included in these images.

As the portraiture of imperial women is a topic which has been the subject of several studies, the subject of their adornment – or lack thereof – has arisen. In keeping with the trend elucidated above, here also the absence of jewellery has received more attention than its presence. \(^{15}\) Imperial women, due to their rarefied status, were themselves expected to provide exemplary models for Roman women to follow. Moreover, their image was physically and psychologically linked to the male members of their family, especially the emperor himself. As such, it seems plausible that there was

\(^{13}\) Sebesta 1997; Fejfer 2008: 345-7.

\(^{14}\) For a discussion on the (possibly) divergent readings of male and female viewers of such images see Elsner 2007: 217-24.

\(^{15}\) Bartman 1999: 44-6 on Livia’s lack of jewellery; Fejfer 2008: 345.
anxiety about the possibility of the imperial women’s image being perceived in a negative light. But what is the implication for portraits which do show them wearing jewellery? The most common answer given to this question by scholars has been that these works were not intended for the public gaze, as they appear most often on cameos and intaglios.\textsuperscript{16} However, the characterisation of these as luxury items which circulated almost entirely within the imperial court itself has not been definitively proven.\textsuperscript{17} Nor does this explanation account for the existence of marble portraits which show evidence of having jewellery attached in antiquity.

Another problem with the explanations provided to date is that literary accounts of what imperial women wore are used as points of comparison. This in itself is not a problem, as the differences in how adornment is represented throughout various forms of media is a topic worthy of discussion. The work of Ginsburg (2006) on the often contradictory representations of Agrippina the Younger in art and literature provides an excellent example of how this might be done. However, scholars tend to regard the literary record as an authentic recording of how imperial women dressed. Thus when artistic portraits are compared to those found in literature it is assumed that there has been selective editing involved in the creation of the visual portrait. Batten writes:

\begin{quote}
The ‘unadorned look’ was more of a propagandistic ideal than it was reality. The contrast between literary accounts of Agrippina the Younger’s lavish displays of wealth in the form of a magnificent cloak made of gold, and rides in a carpentum, usually reserved only for priests, in the heart of Rome, with her official ‘unadorned’ portrait make this clear. Moreover, in private portraits she is depicted with earrings and even a bulla, or amulet that only boys wore. Likewise Cleopatra, famous for her pearls, is depicted with no jewels in official portraiture. This lack of jewellery in public portraits conveys the message that these women were above the craving for baubles and \textit{luxuria}, an identity which would accent their honour in male eyes, for they appeared controlled and strong, like men. However, in reality they apparently enjoyed wearing and doing those things that would signal their high status to the community…\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

As noted above, it is not misguided to suggest that unadorned artistic portraits were the result of a desire to present the imperial women in a particular light which complemented a rhetoric that pervaded Roman literature. However, to regard adorned portraits at face value as their ideological

\textsuperscript{16} Feijer 2008: 348.  
\textsuperscript{17} Kampen completing Ginsburg, see Ginsburg 2006: 166.  
\textsuperscript{18} Batten 2009: 496-7.
opposites, where imperial women were presented as they really appeared, is not especially productive to scholarship on imperial women’s representation nor is it methodologically sound.\footnote{For discussions on modern methods of reading Roman art and how these tend to differ from those in antiquity, see Vogel 1968, especially 274-8; Elsner 2007: 1-3.}

As Dixon writes of Roman representations of women:

all such references [to women] amount to male-centred fantasies and moral statements of what women should or should not be, whether they are nominally attached to individuals, to fictitious characters or to groups of women. What has been labelled women’s history is largely history of male-female relations or of men’s musings about women, usually in terms of women’s sexual and reproductive roles and with more moralising than observation…Henderson’s argument that Roman satire tells us nothing about Roman women but only about cultural constructions of ‘norms, ideals and fantasies’ could be extended to other kinds of imaginative literature and, indeed, to ancient texts generally, including iconography.\footnote{Dixon 2001: 16-17, citing Henderson 1989: 94.}

Aim and Method

As part of this thesis’s approach of analysing accessories as representative symbols of existing beliefs, portrayals of adorned imperial women in literature are not treated as objective statements of fact. As we have seen, accessories such as jewellery and luxurious clothing were employed as motifs by writers who wished to make a point about the women who appeared in their narratives.\footnote{Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 329 ‘…a society that regards luxury as a central concern is likely to be using it to articulate important concerns about social order. Rather than representing a failure to confront the more ‘real’ social and economic issues, it may prove to be antiquity’s way of expressing them.’}

For a prostitute to be written as appearing bedecked in jewels necessarily poses this question in the readers’ minds: how did she acquire these?\footnote{Olson 2002: 395-6 provides a collection of references.} The obvious answers are that she was given them by a besotted customer, or that she purchased them herself with her earnings. In either scenario she profits from her occupation which was the antithesis of ideal Roman female behaviour. The presence of jewellery in such a context emphasises their wearer’s occupation, status, and her behaviour in relation to men – a woman whose affections and loyalties were for sale.\footnote{Cf. Juvenal’s similar characterisation of a wealthy woman, p. 4.} Not all depictions of adorned women were negative, however. Scipio Aemilianus’s mother Papiria had been left destitute until her son gave her the riches he had inherited from his aunt and adoptive
grandmother Aemilia, who was noted for her ‘great magnificence whenever she left her house to take part in the ceremonies that women attend,’ in part due to the ‘richness of her own dress.’ Papiria’s triumphant return to her previous standing was detailed by Polybius:

Formerly she had kept to her house on the occasion of such functions, and now when a solemn public sacrifice happened to take place, and she drove out in all Aemilia’s state and splendour, and when in addition the carriage and pair and the muleteers were seen to be the same, all the women who witnessed it were lost in admiration of Scipio’s goodness and generosity and, lifting up their hands, prayed that every blessing might be his.  

The figure that Papiria struck is central to Polybius’s intended reading of the scene, but she herself is not the subject of his attention. Instead Aemilianus’s filial piety towards his mother is the historian’s focus. The jewellery and other finery that he granted to her were simply a striking way of expressing this concept.

Imperial women were accorded the responsibilities of the welfare of the empire and the continuation of their dynasty, stood as exempla for women throughout the empire, and took part in political manoeuvring within the imperial court. Thus it is to be expected that the accessories with which they were represented were also accordingly granted greater significance. We cannot know for sure what an empress wore – and by this it is meant any individual empress and also the position of empress in general. Although we know that Livia maintained numerous slaves and freedpersons for the upkeep of her wardrobe, this cannot give us concrete evidence for what she wore, when and where she wore it, and why. It solves only a small piece of the puzzle, and much remains conjecture. It is also probable that at least some of the claims that were made about specific women were true – maybe Agrippina did wear a golden chlamys to watch the naumachia, perhaps Poppaea was scrupulous about appearing in public veiled, possibly Plotina was modest in her dress and remained so even after becoming empress. Yet it is impossible to know for sure, and in any case these claims are so intrinsically bound to the context in which they appear and to existing topoi that they cannot and should not be regarded as objective truth. Therefore, since the role that adornment played in literary depictions of women depended upon the context in which it appeared, it is important to examine the surrounding context of the passage as a whole. Although it is not possible to evaluate the meanings of women’s adornment in quite the same way as men’s, there are still

25 For their occupations see Treggiari 1975.
26 Agrippina Plin. HN. 33.63; Tac. Ann. 12.56; Cass. Dio 60.33.3; Poppaea Tac. Ann. 13.45.3; Plotina Plin. Pan. 83.
common readings of adornment, its use, and its treatment which permit the reader to comprehend the author or artist’s intention behind its inclusion.\textsuperscript{27} Sorensen’s work concerning the role of apparel in archaeological analysis, and especially its relation to the construction and performance of gender, provides valuable insight into the motivations behind the inclusion of dress in portrayals of imperial women. Although Sorensen is concerned with the physical permutations of dress, her statement that dress can be ‘critically involved with both the communication and construction of identities’ is also applicable to literary and artistic representations.\textsuperscript{28} Therefore if an item of dress repeatedly appears in a particular context, it is possible to recognise the discourses which were associated with that object. This seems to be particularly the case in visual media. The understanding of these discourses is informed by Roman ideas of feminine qualities and behaviour. Items of apparel which appear almost exclusively on women are both products and producers of the gender category of ‘woman’.\textsuperscript{29} As mentioned above (p.3-4), jewellery and adornment more generally were regarded as associated with femininity. The stereotype that women sought to adorn themselves accounts for the numerous instances in which the imperial women’s behaviour and personality were framed in terms of an interaction between themselves and an item of dress. In visual media, portrayals of women depicted with accessories were also subject to expectations based in gendered concepts. The analysis of the evidence will be conducted by taking into account what message was meant to be conveyed in accordance with concepts of how images of women were constructed rather than seeking to discover an objective truth.

As this thesis is focussed upon the role that accessories played in the construction of imperial women’s images and their representation in art and text, it does not seek to answer the question of what imperial women actually wore, nor does it investigate in depth the visual representation of non-imperial women with jewellery or divine attributes. Additionally, imperial women after 235 AD (the death of Julia Mamaea), cannot be included in this study. However, these limitations aside, this thesis will provide a greater insight into the use of accessories within the specific context of the imperial women.

Chapter One of this thesis will examine passages from ancient texts which mention adornment in relation to the imperial women. Intertextual analysis reveals commonalities concerning particular

\textsuperscript{27} For the use of clothing as a means of characterisation in the \textit{Historia Augusta} see Harlow 2005. For further examples of intertextuality in imperial historiography Ginsburg 2006: 44-6 on Tacitus’s use of stereotypes to characterise the imperial court, and especially Agrippina; also Santoro L’Hoir 2006 on tragic themes in the \textit{Annals}.

\textsuperscript{28} Sørensen 2000: 126.

\textsuperscript{29} Sørensen 2000: 124-30.
scenarios, which allows these passages to be understood not as commentary on what the imperial women wore, but as an indication of how adornment was seen as an effective way of articulating the behaviour of women, especially as it related to the men with whom they were associated.

In Chapter Two, the sculpted imperial portraits that do include jewellery and the purpose that they served will be investigated. As it is clear that it is unlikely that they were produced for a private audience or that they were veristic portrayals of these women, another explanation must be sought. Roman portraits were an amalgamation of several iconographic elements that produced a symbolic rendering of an individual, and costume played a key role in this process. As such it is likely that jewellery also had significant value as a visual symbol, and that this went beyond simply indicating material wealth.

Chapter Three will focus on the use of divine attributes in imperial women’s portraits. For these accessories their symbolic function is clear, and thus the purpose of their inclusion has occasioned less confusion than that of jewellery. However, there are still questions that bear investigation regarding their application to the imperial women. This chapter investigates whether there is a difference between the use of attributes in images of the gods and those of mortal women. The appearance of attributes in images of divinised imperial women will also be examined. By regarding divine attributes as another type of accessory in portraiture rather than as a divine costume in its own right, this chapter will contribute to our understanding of the reasoning behind such portrayals.

30 Roman portraiture: Nodelman 1993; Stewart 2008: 77-80, 89-101.
Chapter One

The Accessories of Imperial Woman in Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the *topoi* which occur in literary references to the clothing of imperial women. I do not intend to ascertain what any particular imperial woman actually wore during her lifetime, as the evidence in this area is limited and in my opinion will not aid in deconstructing images where the portrait is adorned in opposition to the majority of works (the subject of the next chapter). Instead this study will consider the purpose that the inclusion of imperial costume serves in a narrative in relation to the author’s desired depiction of the woman (or, occasionally, man) as a member of the imperial house. In this regard, this thesis will follow the collection of studies over the past two decades that have shifted towards reading literary sketches of women as constructions of the author based upon pervasive and emotive stereotypes of female behaviour, rather than actual glimpses into the lived experience of women in the Roman world.\(^{31}\)

Each of the incidents under consideration in this chapter is subject to a twofold approach – first, how the author makes use of existing stereotypes regarding clothing, particularly in connection with women, in order to transmit their intended message, and second, the role that their inclusion plays in constructing an image of the author’s view of imperial rule. As these incidents are studied, it will become clear that although they have been selected for portraying women’s dress, they are rarely concerned solely with an imperial woman in her own right. Instead, they are almost all written with the character of the emperor in mind, whether he appears in the passage in question or not. In light of the recognition of the roles in which women are made to serve as literary devices, this should not come as a surprise. Given my aim to identify and evaluate the use of such devices, rather than attempting to discover some sort of ‘true’ reading of imperial women’s costume, this also does not present much of an impediment. Instead, the constant presence of the emperor in these anecdotes is helpful for reaching an understanding of the use of clothing in constructing representations of the imperial family and the roles that women were made to play therein.

Mentions of their attire in textual sources have received varying treatments. In some cases, these instances of adorned women seem to be held up as the reality which the unadorned portraits react

against in order to construct artificial images of the women in question.  

However, this is a false dichotomy. Whatever the sartorial status of these women in reality, the textual record should not be considered to be an impartial representation of it. The following example illustrates how it was a particular author’s agenda that was the determining factor in how a woman’s dress constructed her literary self, not just the presence of particular items of clothing or jewellery. The connotations these had acquired aided in conveying the intended message to the audience, but the method of their employment was not set in stone. If a woman was the subject of an author’s disapproval, even wearing clothing associated with modesty and chastity could be cause for criticism. According to Valerius Maximus, it was thought proper for a woman to wear a veil in public as this preserved her modesty and concealed her beauty to all but her husband. To not do so could be justification enough for a divorce.  

However, the empress Poppaea’s concealment of herself from the public eye in this manner was deemed suspicious by Tacitus:

She paraded modestness and practiced recklessness, rarely emerging in public and then only with part of her face screened by a veil, lest she satisfy people’s gaze or because it became her.

*modestiam praeverre et lascivia uti; rarus in publicum egressus, idque velata parte oris, ne satiaret adspectum, vel quia sic decebat.*

Not only was this proclaimed physical modesty at odds with her inner depravity, but it was ascribed sinister motives. Tacitus acknowledges the usual meaning of a woman veiling her face in keeping with Valerius Maximus’s anecdote – to guard against the gaze of people other than her husband – but immediately offers an alternative theory that is the antithesis of this ideal, which he supports with his recounting of her shameless behaviour in other respects. It is to Tacitus’s purpose to present her in a way that measures up to his pronouncement that ‘no less distinctive in that year was the immorality which marked the beginning of massive calamities for the state’ (non minus insignis eo anno impudicitia magnorum rei publicae malorum initium fecit.)  

By insinuating that Poppaea not only shrouded her depraved nature to be modest in her dress but actually wanted to

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32 Batten 2009: 497

33 Val. Max. 6.3.10; for this anecdote’s relation to the question of morality in the early empire see Hilton and Matthews 2008: 339-40. For the ideal costume of the *matrona*, including a mantle (*palla*) which could be used as a veil, see Sebesta 2001: 48-9.

34 Tac. Ann. 13.45.3.

35 Tac. Ann. 13.45.3-45.6.

present herself as desirable, contrary to the veil’s purpose, Tacitus can further vilify her as an enemy of traditional Roman values. It is not what is worn per se that determines this treatment, but the historian’s own opinion of his subject. Respectable women went about veiled, but for Tacitus Poppaea was eminently unrespectable. Thus, if a woman like her wore a veil it was for the wrong reason.

Proving the Lie: Augustus, Livia, and Julia

As this chapter will demonstrate, dress was regarded as a suitable device by the actions of the imperial family could be characterised and evaluated. The potential for dress to be used in this way - for these personal effects to influence perceptions of the foremost women in the empire - needs an explanation. Recent scholarship has examined the role that the portrayal of the family and its private affairs played in the late republican and early imperial period, as Romans sought to account for and react to the rapid political and social upheaval they faced. One of the new institutions of this changed world was the household of Augustus and its supremacy which resulted in the promulgation of the idea that it was both an exemplum to be admired and imitated, and synonymous with the Roman state itself.³⁷ Milnor has raised and considered this problem of the nominally private concept of the family becoming the public concern of the empire, pointing out the instrumental role that the women of Augustus’s family had in providing a connection between these two concepts, as ‘the best representatives of what we might call “politicised domesticity”: the idea that certain relationships may transcend the divide between public and private life.’³⁸ The behaviour of women was used as a literary device to assess and portray the well-being of the Roman state, and as the women of the princeps’s family began to supersede other women in their importance,³⁹ they were both presented and perceived as singularly responsible for upholding these values.⁴⁰ The representations of the imperial women that we find in literature should be considered with this in mind. Their actions within the domus Augusta took on public significance, and their behaviour – good or bad – in this microcosm of the empire was perceived as having wider political repercussions. The good behaviour of imperial women in the context of the domus Augusta was intentionally held up to the public eye as exempla to be emulated from the inception of the principate.⁴¹

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³⁷ Mordine 2013: 103.
³⁸ Milnor 2008: 93.
³⁹ A contributing factor to the perceived distinction and exclusivity of the imperial family was its frequent practice of endogamy, contrary to normal practice for noble Roman families; see Severy 2002: 63, following Corbier 1994.
Augustus could put forth the women of his family as partners in his opposition of dissolute behaviour, thereby providing legitimacy to his own authority.\textsuperscript{42} As part of his social reforms he instituted the \textit{lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus} rewarding members of the senatorial and equestrian ranks for marrying,\textsuperscript{43} but met with resistance from senators who claimed that the behaviour of their female contemporaries was not an incentive to marriage:

\begin{quote}
...a clamour arose in the senate over the disorderly conduct of the women and of the young men, this being alleged as a reason for their reluctance to enter into the marriage relation; and when they urged [Augustus] to remedy this abuse also, with ironical allusions to his own intimacy with many women, he at first replied that the most necessary restrictions had been laid down and that anything further could not possibly be regulated by decree in similar fashion. Then, when he was driven into a corner, he said: ‘You yourselves ought to admonish and command your wives as you wish; that is what I do.’ When they heard that, they plied him with questions all the more, wishing to learn what the admonitions were which he professed to give Livia. He accordingly, though with reluctance, made a few remarks about women’s dress and their other adornment, about their going out and their modest behaviour, not in the least concerned that his actions did not lend credence to his words.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

Here Augustus is shown appealing to a connection between women being restrained in their dress and conduct (by their husbands, since their own nature was not up to the task) and their role as obedient wives. Cassius Dio regards this as a tired aphorism, which the \textit{princeps} himself does not ascribe to in reality, and the senators are not fooled. Their onslaught of questions after Augustus claimed to control Livia is born out of an anticipation for mockery rather than a genuine desire for advice.\textsuperscript{45} Livia is not the compliant wife for whom the senators wish;\textsuperscript{46} and the \textit{princeps}’s attempt to maintain his moral high ground by making perfunctory remarks about modesty in attire and

\textsuperscript{42}Notable examples include the \textit{Porticus Liviae} on the former site of Vedius Pollio’s house on the Esquiline Hill (Ov. \textit{Fast.} 6.640-8; Suet. \textit{Aug.} 29.4; Cass. Dio 54.23.1-6; Milnor 2008:60-3), the dedication of the temple of Concordia, possibly within the \textit{Porticus Liviae} (Ov. \textit{Fast.} 6.637-8; Suet. \textit{Aug.} 29.4; Flory 1984: 317, 319-323), and the donation of the largest specimen of rock crystal on the Capitoline Hill (Plin. \textit{HN.} 37.10; see Flory 1988: 503-4 for the Augustan family’s practice of donating precious objects to temples.)

\textsuperscript{43}For the effect of these laws on perceptions of Augustus’s family see Edwards 1993: 40-42; Severy 2003: 52-6.

\textsuperscript{44}Cass. Dio 54.16.3-5.

\textsuperscript{45}See Kemezis 2007 for the implications of Cassius Dio’s treatment of Augustus in relation to the \textit{leges Iulia} and \textit{Papia-Poppaea} for his characterisation of Augustus and the political climate of his own age.

\textsuperscript{46}Cassius Dio’s opinion of Livia does not seem to be wholly positive or negative: see Barrett 2002: 237-238 and Adler 2011. However in this passage it is clear that Augustus is not to be believed in his claim that she was subservient to him.
behaviour is not taken seriously by speaker or audience. Despite Augustus’s proclamations of his family's virtues, the historical record that Cassius Dio preserves shows this to be a lie. The historian challenges the public presentation of the Augustan house as the model Roman family and by extension the representation of Livia as the ideal wife who wore a *stola* and made her husband’s clothes. Macrobius, probably repeating tales from an earlier tradition, recounts the troublesome behaviour of Augustus’s daughter Julia, who in addition to committing numerous adulteries and surrounding herself with frivolous young men, dismayed her father by going about in costumes that were extravagant and suggestive. Julia’s fall from grace in 2 BC and banishment on the grounds of adultery resulted in a continuing reputation as a flighty, lustful woman, in strict opposition to what Augustus had expected from her. Her position as daughter of the *princeps* is perceived as a pertinent detail in the recounting of these tales. Augustus has as much trouble controlling her as he does the state – his ‘two spoiled daughters’ – and he approves of a sober outfit by asking ‘isn’t this style of dress more becoming in the daughter of Augustus?’ These anecdotes demonstrate the reception of, on one hand, the image the *domus Augusta* propagated of itself, and on the other, the aberrations from this ideal image which could not be concealed. As Julia’s disgrace became public knowledge, the discrepancy between her profligacy and Augustus’s austerity was manifested in these anecdotes by the rejection of the clothing her father expected her to wear.

**Conspicuous Consumption: Lollia Paulina**

Pliny the Elder’s scathing assessment of Lollia Paulina’s appearance at a banquet is driven both by his personal hatred of frivolous luxury and by the base behaviour of those who enjoyed the supreme power in Rome. Following a diatribe on the ways in which pearls are simultaneously useless and lusted after by women for the prestige they afforded, Pliny sets forth examples of the extreme lengths people went to in order to display their wealth. The third wife of Caligula is his first target:

47 Augustus’s own infidelities (Cass. Dio 54.16.3); the banishment of Julia the Elder (55.10.12-16).


50 Macrob. *Sat.* 2.5.3 extravagant dress and adornment; 2.5.5 suggestive clothing; 2.5.6 disreputable company (*iuventus luxuriosa*).


52 Macrob.*Sat.* 2.5.4; 2.5.5.

I once saw Lollia Paulina, the wife of the Emperor Gaius — it was not at any public festival, or any solemn ceremonial, but only at an ordinary wedding entertainment—covered with emeralds and pearls, which shone in alternate layers upon her head, in her hair, in her wreaths, in her ears, upon her neck, in her bracelets, and on her fingers, and the value of which amounted in all to forty millions of sesterces; indeed she was prepared at once to prove the fact, by showing the receipts and acquittances. Nor were these any presents made by a prodigal potentate, but treasures which had descended to her from her grandfather, and obtained by the spoliation of the provinces…It was for this reason that M. Lollius was held so infamous all over the East for the presents which he extorted from the kings…all this was done, I say, that his grand-daughter might be seen, by the glare of lamps, covered all over with jewels to the amount of forty millions of sesterces! Now let a person only picture to himself, on the one hand, what was the value of the habits worn by Curius or Fabricius in their triumphs, let him picture to himself the objects displayed to the public on their triumphal litters, and then, on the other hand, let him think upon this Lollia, this mere woman, taking her place at table beside an emperor thus attired; would he not much rather that the conquerors had been torn from their very chariots, than that they had conquered for such a result as this?

While the author’s disgust with Lollia Paulina and her jewels is clear, it is also worth noting the qualifications which are applied to this display to make it so outrageous, rather than simply the adornment itself. Pliny begins by noting that rather than appearing to the wider public in such a getup, or participating in a sacred ceremony, she wore this jewellery as a guest at a private affair, where such ostentation was evidently considered to be in poor taste. In the second century BC the sudden increase in wealth and social status of Scipio Aemilianus’s mother Papiria was revealed as she participated in public rituals; therefore it is possible that it was not the jewellery itself that was the problem so much as how it was deployed.55 Fantham, Foley, Kampen, Pomeroy, and Shapiro have noted that it was expected of a wife to advertise her husband’s wealth and prestige, but add that religious ceremonies were the usual context for this display.56 Pliny then goes on to declaim the origin of these jewels as the spoils of provincial extortion by Lollia Paulina’s grandfather, rather than gifts from the ruler of a client kingdom. If the latter had been the case, it may have been that the jewels would then have been perceived as the visual symbol of a willing acceptance of Roman hegemony, rather than as a reminder of dishonourable behaviour.

It should not be regarded as coincidental that the preferable scenarios – that the jewels be worn for a more public occasion, or in a solemn ceremony, and that they be the gift of a foreign ruler – serve to elevate the position and authority of Lollia Paulina and thereby Rome itself. Her position granted her the opportunity to prove herself an asset to the empire and a respectable empress, but instead she uses her jewellery for self-aggrandisement. Pliny’s term for her - ‘this one bit of a woman, sitting beside the head of an empire,’ (unam imperator mulierculam) - illustrates the relationship between an empress’s rank and behaviour as symbolised by her attitude towards her adornment. As Lollia treats her adornment inappropriately, so too does she and her husband treat the empire. That the presence of the jewellery is instrumental for the condemnation of Lollia Paulina is undeniable, but this does not mean that adornment, in of itself, was to be considered emblematic of low character. The value of the jewellery is also raised as cause for concern, but again the relatively low-key situation and the extremely high price contribute to the outrage.\(^57\) Winterling points out the competition inherent in displays of this sort, which the senatorial families could not hope to match.\(^58\) Roller characterises the convivium as ‘an arena in which status distinctions and power relations are established, confirmed, or challenged.’\(^59\) By appearing in such a manner, the emperor’s wife made a declarative statement that she was the wealthiest and also most politically powerful woman in the room. That Lollia Paulina apparently wished to make the exact value of the jewels common knowledge is also indicative of the social statement that was being made.\(^60\) In the political climate amongst hostile senators, which prevailed after the death of Caligula, such unambiguous declarations of unassailable superiority were met with suspicion and contempt.

Lollia Paulina and her jewellery form part of a larger narrative. As monstrous as her luxuria was, it was not the most egregious example. Wearing pearls was mundane compared to the extravagance of drinking them. Pliny escalates the prodigality on display, describing how Cleopatra dissolved a pearl worth ten million sesterces in vinegar and drank it.\(^61\) However, even this incident had its shortcomings as a display of affluence. Pliny awards the palm of victory to Clodius Aesopus, as he acted ‘so that the regalness of the act would be greater’ (quo magis regium fiat) by drinking the

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\(^{57}\) Around 70 years later, 50,000 sesterces was thought sufficient for a new bride to buy garments that would reflect well on her and her husband (Plin. Ep. 6.32).

\(^{58}\) Winterling 2011: 77-8.

\(^{59}\) Roller 2001: 135.

\(^{60}\) Cobb 2013: 149-50.

\(^{61}\) Plin. HN. 9.58.119-121.
pearl due to his own curiosity rather than to a common wager.\textsuperscript{62} There is a heavily sarcastic tone here, but although Pliny disapproves of such luxuria, he is drawing upon the concept, mentioned above, of rulers asserting their pre-eminence through these extravagant displays. The empress Lollia Paulina and queen Cleopatra have been bested by the son of an actor in this farcical contest. The discrepancy between their nominal rank and actual worth, already called into question by this outcome, is emphasised by the pejorative terminology Pliny uses – ‘mere woman’ (muliercula) for Lollia Paulina, and ‘whore queen’ (regina meretrix) for Cleopatra.

**Suitors’ Favours: Messalina**

Recounting the impressive career of Lucius Vitellius, father of the future emperor, Suetonius writes that he received the favour of both Caligula and Claudius through judicious flattery. In the case of Caligula he did so directly, appealing to his aspirations of divinity, but during Claudius’s principate he reserved his efforts for those close to the emperor – his freedmen and his wife Messalina.\textsuperscript{63}

Claudius was obsessed with his wives and freedmen: to curry favour with this emperor Vitellius left no stone unturned. He asked Messalina as an outstanding favour to be allowed to take off her shoes; when she consented he removed her right shoe and always kept it between his toga and his tunics, kissing it from time to time.

*Claudium uxoribus libertisque addictum ne qua non arte demereretur, priximo munere a Messalina petit a sibi pedes praebet excalciandos; detractumque socculum dextrum inter togam tunicasque gestavit assidue, nonnumquam osculabundus.*\textsuperscript{64}

This public display of devotion to the emperor’s wife evidently reaped rewards as he was awarded two consulships in partnership with Claudius, as well as the office of censor.\textsuperscript{65} Lucius’s method of courting Messalina’s favour was just that – removing a woman’s shoes for her is suggested as a declaration of love by Ovid, and it seems quite possible that the amorous connotations of Lucius’s act were clear to his readers in the early second century.\textsuperscript{66} Claudius had the dubious reputation of being strongly influenced by the whims of his wives Messalina and Agrippina, and Vitellius is

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\textsuperscript{62} Plin. *HN.* 9.58.122. This story is first mentioned in Hor. *Serm.* 2.3.239-42, where Clodius is said to have taken the pearl from the ear of Metella, a detail which is not repeated in Pliny’s account despite (or because of?) the similarity to the Cleopatra incident. Ullman 1957:193-4 gives an overview of these accounts and their various permutations.

\textsuperscript{63} Suet. *Vit.* 2.5; also Cass. Dio 59.27.2-6 for more flattery of Caligula by L. Vitellius.

\textsuperscript{64} Suet. *Vit.* 2.5.

\textsuperscript{65} Cass. Dio 60.29.1.

\textsuperscript{66} Ov. *Ars Am.* 2.212.
repeatedly shown allying himself with these women in our sources. Adding to the insinuation that Lucius Vitellius was richly rewarded for gauging Messalina’s capacity for influencing her husband’s decisions, Suetonius also seems to be slyly alluding to Messalina’s notoriety as an adulteress, as she permits a man other than her husband to treat her openly in the same manner as he would a lover. The case of Messalina has been noted as literally embodying the theme of female infidelity in relation to civic discord in Roman literature. Therefore, Messalina’s shoe becomes a symbol of the dysfunctional relationships between husband and wife, emperor and subject, and *matrona* and suitor. What was previously a private exchange between individuals becomes a matter of political significance.

One recurring motif in the textual record is the use of ornaments which had been in the possession of previous imperial women. The possible existence of a repository of imperial clothing has attracted interest, but its rhetorical importance should also be considered. The treatment in literature of these heirlooms indicates that they were recognised as being imbued with the prestige of their previous owners. In at least one instance occurring beyond the chronological scope of this thesis, they were used as betrothal gifts from emperors to their intended wives, indicating that they represented inclusion into the imperial family and an assimilation with previous empresses and princesses. Although our sources for the earlier Imperial period do not contain explicit references to it in a betrothal context, it seems clear that jewellery denoted as belonging to the imperial women still held a special significance. These earlier examples all contain negative judgements, as the people involved are regarded as unsuitable to wear these ornaments for various reasons. This improper usage then compromised the integrity of the imperial family and, critically, its fitness as an institution.

**Imperial Heirlooms**

Heirlooms and other material representations of a person’s familial connections held great significance for Romans. Items of dress seem to have been especially significant due to their

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67 Claudius unduly influenced by his wives: Tac. *Ann.* 11.28, 12.1; Suet. *Claud.* 25.5; Cass. *Dio* 60.31.8, 60.32.1. L. Vitellius acting in Messalina’s interests: Tac. *Ann.* 11.2-3 (where Vitellius also mentions having been close to Antonia the Younger); Cass. *Dio* 60.29.6; in Agrippina’s: Tac. *Ann.* 12.4; Cass. *Dio* 61.31.8. See also Osgood 2011: 42, 88.

68 Joshel 1995: 60-2; for female infidelity more generally see Edwards 1993:34, 42-3.


70 Claud. *Nupt.* 10-13: ‘Already he prepares gifts for his betrothed and selects to adorn her (though their beauty is less than hers) the jewels once worn by noble Livia of old and all the proud women of the imperial house.’ (*quidquid venerabilis olim Livia divorumque nurus gessere superbæ*) However, the use of the term *nurus* (daughter-in-law) may specifically refer to Julia the Elder and Antonia the Younger.
perceived ability to serve as a tangible link between users. Hope, in her study of the significance of personal effects of a deceased person to those who mourned them, states:

Jewellery, and other domestic items, were imbued with their own history and associations which could affect the living and how they remembered the dead...we can say that in general such material objects gave expression to mourning both private and public and integrated the dead with the everyday lives of the living.\[71\]

Although Hope’s study is focussed upon private emotions regarding these mementoes in a mortuary context, the overall idea that a deceased person’s belongings could evoke deep emotions in those who cherished the deceased’s memory, to the extent that a shared sense of identity could be forged, can also be applied in a framework wider than that of immediate family and friends. As we will see, the use of items of dress associated with noteworthy people could take various forms in Roman literature. First, it could be advertised by those who hoped to emulate the original owner’s deeds, thus creating a tangible link between themselves and their role model. The connection did not have to be made clear by the new owner’s declaration, as some objects, which were considered special due to a former bearer, were implied to convey or reveal connections of character. Finally, someone could wear an item which showed a connection on a superficial level, but could then prove themselves to be unworthy to propagate the memory of their predecessor. It is this final possibility that appears most frequently regarding the dress of imperial women.

A famous example of the first type is Pompey wearing the cloak of Alexander the Great in his triumph in 61 BC.\[72\] Pompey’s desire to emulate Alexander is well attested.\[73\] By wearing Alexander’s cloak as he celebrated his victory in the East the connection between them was made explicit. If we assume Appian’s information is correct, then the historian’s own scepticism is of little importance for the purposes of my argument. Pompey evidently wanted people to believe that he was wearing Alexander’s clothing that day. If, in fact, Pompey had done no such thing, then this anecdote still serves as an example of the potential that dressing one man up in the clothes of another specific person had for creating an impression of him for an audience.\[74\] Elsewhere Appian

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\[71\] Hope 2011: 189-90.
\[72\] App. Mith. 24.117. Appian is our only source to include this detail of Pompey’s triumph; Plutarch, Pliny the Elder and Cassius Dio all mention the opulence on display, in varying amounts of detail.
\[73\] Spencer 2002: 18-9 does not mention this incident, but otherwise gives a good overview of the tradition of Pompey’s aim to emulate Alexander, including his attempts at visual imitation.
\[74\] Beard 2007: 178: ‘Pompey’s reputed use of the cloak of Alexander the Great was not just an instance of a Roman general taking on the mantle of his most famous predecessor, but a larger gesture portraying Rome as the successor of the empire of Macedon.’
is dubious about Pompey’s true feelings on his potential appointment as dictator.\textsuperscript{75} Raising the possibility that he dressed in the clothes of a king has the effect of further sowing seeds of doubt of Pompey’s motivations in the readers’ minds.

Pompey was not the only one said to have put on the garb of Alexander. Rounding off Caligula’s list of sartorial transgressions, Suetonius claims that the emperor ‘sometimes [wore] the breastplate of Alexander the Great, which he had taken from his sarcophagus.’\textsuperscript{76} Here Caligula’s actions are clearly meant to be disapproved of and ridiculed. He had only won one war, a debacle which Suetonius describes in gleeful detail.\textsuperscript{77} Furthermore, this emphasises the incongruity of him also wearing ‘the dress of a triumphing general, even before he went on campaign’ – a war that was celebrated with a triumph full of costumed captives.\textsuperscript{78} His cavalier treatment of this artefact is also in contrast to the reverential behaviour of Augustus and other Romans.\textsuperscript{79} In short, Caligula is consistently shown as having an irreverent attitude towards Roman traditions of suitable dress. His appropriation of Alexander’s breastplate is not only a further example of this but also demonstrates that the dress of an eminent person took on special significance on account of its history. If it was later worn by somebody else, it served as a useful device for drawing comparisons, both favourable and unfavourable, between the wearers. Much later, Zenobia was depicted as increasing her prestige by owning the effects of Dido and Cleopatra, but more importantly, associating herself with these two women in their role as enemies of Rome.\textsuperscript{80} Working with the belief that what was worn ought to reflect the bearer’s status and character, writers could shape the perception of a person by associating them with their predecessors through shared personal effects.

Sometimes, as in the cases of Pompey and Zenobia, the implications of an object and the comparison it invited was recognised and promoted by the person who wore it. However, in other instances like that of Caligula, they remained unaware of, or held misguided beliefs about, the connotations and how these would manifest in a new context. For example, Juvenal mentions an

\textsuperscript{75} Cluett 1994: 215.
\textsuperscript{76} Suet. Cal.52.
\textsuperscript{77} Suet. Cal. 43-6.
\textsuperscript{78} Suet. Cal. 52 (dressing in triumphalem ornatum); 47: ‘Then turning his attention to his triumph, in addition to a few captives and deserters from the barbarians he chose all the tallest of the Gauls, and as he expressed it, those who were “worthy of a triumph,” as well as some of the chiefs. These he reserved for his parade, compelling them not only to dye their hair red and to let it grow long, but also to learn the language of the Germans and assume barbarian names.’
\textsuperscript{79} Suet. Aug. 18.1.
\textsuperscript{80} SHA. Tyr. Trig. 30.2, 30.19.
outstanding gemstone (*notissimus adamas*) which was ‘made the more precious by once gracing Berenice’s finger’ (*Beronices in digito factus pretiosior*). Its origins – ‘a gift to his incestuous sister from barbarous Herod Agrippa’ – serve to pour further scorn on the avaricious women who value it so highly. However, this should not be the sole meaning derived from this passage. Although Juvenal is quick to undermine the perceived value of the ring by defaming Berenice, the fact that he found it necessary to do so makes it clear that her ownership really was thought to make the ring more noteworthy and desirable.

A person could also be judged as unworthy to represent an eminent predecessor through their dress. Therefore, connections were understood to be created between individuals associated with a common object, and it is possible that, as Hope argues, items which were worn were especially potent for this purpose. Moreover, I would draw attention to how the opinions of people outside of this dialogue contribute to its meaning by passing judgement on the suitability of the person to draw upon and interact with the memory of the person who originally gave the item its meaning and significance. I aim to demonstrate that this discourse, which repeatedly occurs in relation to the dress of the imperial women both as a group and as individuals, has the effect of promoting the reputation of the women who left these heirlooms, which in turn makes it possible for writers to comment upon the appropriateness of any person who wore them afterwards. As the character and behaviour of imperial women, alongside the emperor’s own treatment of them, is a recognised *topos* in Roman historiography for writing about the imperial family as a political structure, these items functioned as yet another tool for characterisation.

It is almost certainly not a coincidence that three of these episodes occur during Nero’s reign. It has been noted how his behaviour in the context of the imperial household has been represented as antithetical to the conduct of Augustus and the establishment of the imperial family as a political entity in its own right, contributing to the downfall of his dynasty. This antipathy towards the *exemplum* of Augustus appears to be extended towards the memory of the earlier imperial women. However, even women who had been born into the imperial family could be censured for their attitudes towards their ancestor’s heirlooms. After the death of Claudius and accession of Nero, Tacitus claims that Agrippina began to crave recognition equal to that of her son. The two became

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81 It is not certain which gem is meant here, as *adamas* refers to diamonds but also to other stones (Plin. *HN*. 37.15.55-8.)

82 Juv. *Sat.* 6.149-60.

83 Courtney 1980: 281.

estranged after Nero began an affair with the freedwoman Acte, contrary to his mother’s wishes, and she tried in vain to reassert her dominance over him. Tacitus writes that, at this time:

[...]

... Caesar inspecto ornatu, quo principium coniuges ac parentes effulserant, deligit vestem et gemmas misitque donum matri, nulla parsimonia, cum praecipua et cupita aliis prior deferret.

Agrippina’s reaction was not what he had been expecting:

[she] complained loudly that these gifts did not enrich her wardrobe, but in fact closed it off from what was left, and that her son was distributing these things, all of which he had gained from herself.

sed Agrippina non his instrui cultus suos, sed ceteris arceri proclamat et dividere filium, quae cuncta ex ipsa haberet.

According to Tacitus, Nero had carried out his inspection of the wardrobe ‘by chance’ (forte), but surely this trust in the vagaries of fortune cannot be extended to the recounting of this anecdote. Agrippina’s desire to possess all the treasures of the imperial wardrobe, to which she believes herself entitled, is reminiscent of her repeated attempts to be recognised as co-ruler. She is not content to rely on the generosity of her son, instead wishing to accumulate the prestige conveyed by these articles to herself. This incident has been noted as the beginning of real antagonism between the two. Therefore, Tacitus is here using the collected clothing of the imperial women as a device to represent Agrippina as power-hungry and testing the constraints of her position.

This potential use of ornament as a means of gaining influence was not without precedent. At the naumachia at the Fucine Lake in AD 52 Agrippina had appeared wearing a chlamys woven from

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85 Tac. Ann. 13.12-3. Agrippina’s references to Acte as ‘her freedwoman rival, her daughter-in-law the maid’ (libertam aemulam, nurum ancillam) show how agitated by Nero’s attentions to her she was thought to be, as well as her consciousness of their disparate status; perhaps she was concerned that Nero was keeping the rest of the collection in reserve for Acte’s use.
87 Hälikkä 2002: 97; Ginsburg 2006: 42.
golden thread. At this event, she had signalled her intention to play a more active role in the empire by upbraiding Narcissus, one of Claudius’s trusted freedmen who had been in charge of the disastrous engineering works. Her eyecatching attire is treated as symptomatic of her increasing desire to wield public power. Santoro L’Hoir identifies Agrippina’s appearance in the *chlamys* as part of an ongoing theme in the *Annals*, in which Agrippina and her mother physically and metaphorically transgress the Roman gender binary through their dress, aberrations which are closely related to Nero’s later transgression in appearing in actor’s garb. In these cases there are clear boundaries which have been crossed to the detriment of the stability of the empire. The *chlamys* (or *paludamentum* in Pliny’s account) was a garment with military connotations, and Agrippina’s public attempts to represent herself as a partner in *imperium* had occurred at events with military associations, making her desire to act in a male capacity more obvious to a Roman mindset. There is not such an obvious demarcation in the case of the imperial ornaments. However, it fits in well with Tacitus’s use of the theme of dangerous women who transgress the boundary of decorum in their desire to exert power. In the case of Agrippina, this was done by adorning herself with conspicuous accoutrements beyond the bounds of what was prescribed to her. By rejecting the portion of the imperial wardrobe that the emperor offered to her, Agrippina was revealing her unbridled ambition which exceeded that of her predecessors, who, Tacitus leads

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88 Tac. *Ann.* 12.56. Pliny the Elder first described this garment as a *paludamentum* (*HN*: 33.63), while both Tacitus and Cassius Dio (60.33.3) call it a *chlamys*. Both terms contain militaristic connotations, contributing to her presentation as the dreaded *dux femina*.


90 A negative characterisation of Agrippina which is concisely deconstructed by Kaplan 1979: 413-4. Ginsburg 2006: 110 notes that Agrippina is repeatedly depicted as cognisant of the effect of costume upon observers and takes advantage of this through Nero’s dress (Tac. *Ann.*12.41.1-2) as well as her own.


92 Tac. *Ann.* 12.36-7: Agrippina sat on her own dais when Caratacus surrendered to Claudius and received equal acclaim. ‘It was of course a novelty, quite unfamiliar to the ancients, that a female should preside over Roman standards; but she was presenting herself as partner in the command once won by her ancestors’ (Tac. *Ann.* 12.37.4.) Later Agrippina attempted to greet the Armenian envoys alongside Nero as they begged for Rome’s assistance against Parthia (Tac *Ann.*13.5.2.) The sight of a woman and two unmilitary men in soldier’s raiment also contributes to the farcical nature of the *naumachia*.

93 Recent studies have noted the similarities between the rhetoric of Livy’s *lex Oppia* debate and the Tacitean debate whether provincial governors should be accompanied by their wives, both of which have their basis in anxieties concerning the potential for women to usurp the authority of men and infringe upon the traditionally male sphere of public life. See Santoro L’Hoir 2006: 124 and Milnor 2008: 140-84 for further insights into Tacitus’s debate in relation to Livy’s.
us to assume, were contented with their ornaments. Although this anecdote evokes an association between extravagant dress and immorality, it is not Tacitus’s main objective. If it had been, his purpose would have been sufficiently served by leaving out the detail of the objects’ history. Nero had become their owner through his mother’s machinations to ensure that he would succeed Claudius. Agrippina clearly understood them to be symbolic of imperium, as she argues that Nero only had control over them because of her. The implication is that because she was responsible for his new position, it was only fair that she should reap the benefits as she wished. Notably, her complaints on this matter had ‘no lack of people to interpret [them] for the worse when they reported [them]’ further developing this incident’s role in depicting Agrippina’s growing ambition. The matter culminates with Nero dismissing Pallas from his station as a rationibus because of his closeness to Agrippina. The reports that reached Nero were evidently alarming enough that he began to dismantle his mother’s power structures.

In the tragedy Octavia, probably written after Nero’s death and possibly during the Flavian period, Claudia Octavia, the daughter of Claudius and first wife of Nero, is in danger of being supplanted as consort by Poppaea Sabina. The first third of the play is taken up by Octavia lamenting to her nurse that Poppaea has usurped her position and belongings, including this bitter remark: ‘this arrogant mistress, glittering with the spoils of my house’ (his superbam paelicem, nostrae domus spoliis nitentem.) Ferri interprets spoliis nitentem figuratively, in the sense of Poppaea shining forth in the manner of a victorious general. However, I believe that it is possible to preserve this militaristic meaning while interpreting nitentem more literally. If the spoils of Octavia’s house are taken to be the imperial jewellery and clothes that she, as empress, was entitled to wear, Poppaea is then

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94 It is interesting and perhaps surprising that no other imperial woman in the Annals is portrayed as greedy for ornaments, despite the potential present in the narratives of the adulteresses Livilla and Messalina. Agrippina’s uniqueness in this matter should probably be regarded as analogous to her distinction as the most egregious example of muliebris impotentia.
97 Barrett 2002 notes the connection between Pallas’s dismissal and the ‘seemingly trivial’ exchange between Agrippina and Nero, but seems puzzled by the claim that he received the garments from her, as they were not her own property (p.133), and believes that the phrasing that Tacitus uses ‘would be an unusual expression to convey the idea that Nero owed the principate to Agrippina.’ (p.286, n.140.) However, I would argue that the passages following this incident do support that reading (also favoured by Ginsburg 2006: 42): Agrippina says to Nero that he had taken up Claudius’s imperium ‘through the injustices of his mother’ (per iniurias matris) and threatens to press Britannicus’ claim, drawing upon the credentials of her family to do so (Tac. Ann. 14.2-3).
98 For the debate concerning authorship and date of composition see Kragelund 1988 504-8 and Smith 2002: 392 n.3-6.
100 Ferri 2003: 323.
understood to be displaying her victory in displacing Octavia. Moreover, Octavia could lay claim to these treasures not solely by means of being empress but also as a member of the Julio-Claudian family by birth.\textsuperscript{101} It is not an accident that they are defined as \textit{spolia}, as numerous sources indicate that clothing and gems played extremely important roles in Roman thought in representing the defeat of an enemy.\textsuperscript{102} The contents of the imperial wardrobe, given to her by the emperor himself, are now her spoils for her to parade in the manner of a triumphant general. Poppaea’s display of herself and the Julio-Claudian \textit{spolia}, as written by the author of the \textit{Octavia}, was intended to have the dual effect of advertising Octavia’s defeat as well as Poppaea taking her place. By taking items that were not Octavia’s alone, but that of the imperial family, Poppaea’s status as an interloper into the \textit{domus Augusta} is made clear. The removal of Octavia from the imperial household foreshadows the destruction of the Julio-Claudian family, which Smith sees as the main theme of the play, with the character of Octavia serving as ‘a metonym for her family,’ thereby emphasising the importance of her poor treatment.\textsuperscript{103}

Octavia also refers to Poppaea as ‘a hostile victress looming over my marriage-chamber’ (\textit{inimica victrix imminet thalamis meis}), solidifying this portrayal of Poppaea as a successful trespasser into the imperial marriage and as a martial conqueror.\textsuperscript{104} By likening Poppaea’s display of the imperial family’s belongings to a triumphting general displaying his spoils, these jewels and clothes become a representation of the imperial rank of which Octavia is being deprived, not only because Poppaea is displacing her in Nero’s affections but also because she now lacks the physical symbols of her predecessors and the symbolic authority they give her.\textsuperscript{105} Smith points out how the private drama in the \textit{Octavia} is elevated to a public matter. The main action of the play is domestic, with Octavia being ousted from her bedroom in the palace and Poppaea being inserted in her place, but this of course takes on wider repercussions due to the positions of those involved.\textsuperscript{106}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Whitman 1982: 87 ‘as daughter of Claudius, Octavia regards the imperial house as her own and Nero’s only through her.’ Smith 2002: 406-8 on the issues of Octavia’s own legitimacy within the play. It is called into question by Nero, but supported by the chorus.
\item For example, Plin. \textit{HN}. 37.6 (Pompey’s triumph in 61 BC); Jos. \textit{BJ}. 7.5.5 (the triumph of Vespasian and Titus). See also Beard 2007: 147-51 and Östenberg 2011: 94-108 for the role that the display of enemy spoils played in the triumph.
\item Smith 2002: 425-6.
\item [Sen.] \textit{Oct}. 131; Kragelund 2002: 45-7.
\item Plin. \textit{HN}. 37.2-3, 37.5, 37.19, 37.32 for precious gems being held by rulers. See also Östenberg 2009: 107 on the royal provenance of many gemstones and pearls paraded in triumphs.
\item Smith 2002: 412-3.
\end{enumerate}
being stripped of her badges of rank. With the Flavian agenda of holding up Claudius as the last legitimate emperor, an author who wished to win the approval of the emperor must present Nero and Poppaea as unfit for their positions, acting in an impious manner to Claudius’s daughter.\textsuperscript{107}

The manner in which Octavia refers to Poppaea is revealing. By calling her a \textit{superbam paelice}, she is pointing out her lack of a legal relationship to Nero, in contrast to his and Octavia’s marriage and thereby disparaging Poppaea for her pretensions in appropriating the use of the imperial family’s dress. Therefore, it would seem that the author of the \textit{Octavia} was aware of the existence of adornments which were considered to belong to the imperial house as a whole, and regarded someone not part of the imperial family wearing them as symbolically invasive. This transgression also echoes another concern held by Romans pertaining to the usurpation of belongings from a rightful owner. The \textit{captator}, or \textit{captatrix}, made frequent appearances in first-century literature.\textsuperscript{108}

The problem of inheritances being divided in an unfair or disagreeable manner among a family was one thing, but the inheritance-hunter was another matter, gaining their notoriety from the complete lack of any familial claim. They were portrayed as driving a wedge between the \textit{testator} and his or her legal heirs, often achieving this aim through sexual favours.\textsuperscript{109} Of course, the situation in the \textit{Octavia} is not that of Nero on his deathbed, willing the personal effects of the imperial family to Poppaea. Yet the threat posed and the concerns that this engendered are essentially the same. Poppaea is the outsider to the family circle, who enters into sexual relations with Nero, who, like the \textit{testator}, appears to have ultimate control over these objects and can dispose of them to his own pleasure. Meanwhile Octavia, as the rightful bearer of her house’s heirlooms, is left dispossessed. As in the stories about \textit{captatores}, Poppaea, as the interloper, is held accountable for the theft, although it is Nero who has the power to dispose of the objects. The social rarity of the self-containment of the Julio-Claudian family, which frequently made endogamous marriages, further associates Poppaea with the defining character of the \textit{captator} - their status as an \textit{extraneus}.

Sometime after the death of Poppaea, Nero is said to have treated the freedman Sporus as his new bride, whereupon he was addressed as ‘queen’, ‘lady’ and ‘mistress’.\textsuperscript{110} Nero’s feminisation of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[107] See Smith 2002: 427-30 for further discussion of this theory. Kragelund 1988: 504-8 favours a composition date under Galba, who would also have approved of Nero’s denigration in the play.
\item[108] The actual existence and number of \textit{captatores} has been called into question (Mansbach 1982:68-76.) However, the creation of a horde of inheritance-hunters and its ensuing spread is an indication of the anxiety felt in regard of the proper transmission of property and memory.
\item[109] Champlin 1991: 87–102 for a good explanation of the stereotype of the \textit{captator}. Some instances of \textit{captatores} displacing family members: Hor. \textit{Serm} 2.4.45-50; Sen. \textit{Marc}.19.2. See also Plin.\textit{Ep}.6.33 for the case brought forth by a woman who had been disinherited in favour of her new stepmother.
\end{footnotes}
Sporus was not restricted to his forms of address. Suetonius relates that Nero took Sporus out in public ‘arrayed in the ornaments of the Augustae’ (*Augustarum ornamentis excultum*). This episode is relayed in the section of Nero’s biography that contains his excesses of lust, and is clearly intended to further demonise him. That Sporus was wearing women’s clothing was incitement enough for Roman derision, as it was seen as additional evidence for his emasculation. It could also be argued that like a woman, Sporus was unable to take an active political role and was thus reliant upon his dress to refine him, echoing the point of view Livy accords to Valerius Flaccus in the debate over the *lex Oppia* and further disassociating him from the role of a Roman man. However this reading is only sufficient if Suetonius, like Dio Chrysostom, had only reported that he wore the dress and trappings of a woman in general. The phrasing used emphasises the hallowed nature of Sporus’s costume. To begin with, *excolo* conveys the more specific meaning of improving, refining, or ennobling. It can also be used of marble that has been worked, and Vout raises the possibility of interpreting this passage as an example of the characterisation of Nero as a man who desired to overturn the natural order of the world according to his own whims, a natural extension of the perversities of the emperor who received the senate in stained or floral tunics and who acted on stage in the costumes of women and slaves. The likening of Sporus to an artistic surface that was moulded into a facsimile of a woman by means of ornamentation echoes Orpheus’s tale of Pygmalion bedecking his ivory statue with clothing and jewellery as though it were a real woman. Cassius Dio’s account of Sporus’s time in the imperial court does not contain the detail of whose ornaments he wore, but instead provides more information about his wardrobe arrangements. He had a woman of good family, Calvia Crispinilla, appointed to supervise himself.

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112 Sen. *Cont.* 1.9; Wyke 1994: 136 gives a comprehensive overview of the negative rhetoric associated with women’s primping and how it was extended to men who were thought to take excessive care with their appearance.

113 Livy 34.7; Wyke 1994: 139.

114 Dio. Chrys. *Or.* 21.7; *Dig.* 34.23.2 (Ulpian): ‘Women’s clothing is that intended for the use of the mother of the family, and which a man cannot readily wear without censure.’ What Sporus wore clearly fell into this category.

115 OLD sv. ‘*excolo*’.


and his apparel, instead of the usual male slave. The inversion of gender and status here is a microcosm of the bizarre world of Nero’s reign.

Historians were not the only ones who recognised the emotive potential of the mistreatment of material sites of memory. Fronto, the tutor and correspondent of Marcus Aureliius, was horrified to learn that Matidia the Younger’s belongings were in danger of being snatched up by undesirables after her recent death, and he was particularly concerned about what was to become of her jewellery. He expresses outrage at the possibility that a pearl necklace owned by the grand-niece of Trajan, sister-in-law and third cousin to Hadrian, and great-aunt of Marcus Aureliius, would not be passed down to the emperor’s daughters, to whom they had been bequeathed, but instead would fall into the grasp of a ‘fattened foster-child, a complete nobody.’ Fronto’s anxiety concerning this matter is framed in terms of familial relations and the subsequent duties to the deceased Matidia and the living daughters which Marcus and Faustina must carry out, even if they might wish to observe the Falcidian law even to their own family’s disadvantage. Although the necklace was far from being Matidia’s sole possession, Fronto fixates on it in order to press his point. He conjures up an image of the pearls inappropriately ‘adorn[ing] the trunk of that bloated glutton’ while the necks of Matidia’s beloved great-grand nieces remain bare. The ‘celebrated string of pearls, which everyone talks of’ may have originally been the subject of attention for its fine appearance, but this should be considered as only one aspect of their importance in Fronto’s mind. It is the thought of these pearls being owned and worn by those unworthy of such a treasure (that is, anyone who was not the imperial daughters) that raises his ire. In the two subsequent letters concerning the case, one a reply from Marcus and the other sent by Fronto to Aufidius Victorinus, the necklace which once occasioned so impassioned a plea does not merit a mention. But the fact that Marcus

118 Cass. Dio. 62.11.3–4. Calvia Crispinilla has a notorious reputation in the historical record. She is also found in Tacitus’s Histories where ‘[she] had taught Nero profligacy; then she had crossed to Africa to stir up Clodius Macer to rebellion, and had openly tried to bring famine on the Roman people’ (1.73.)

119 Champlin 2003: 146-51 considers the Sporus episode and similar incidents to be part of Nero’s promotion and extension of the Saturnalia in an attempt to make himself more popular. Such incidents, which involved the reversal and relaxation of social norms, could then easily be recounted in the worst possible light.

120 Front. Ad. M. Caes. 2.16.

121 Front. Ad. M. Caes. 2.16.1.

122 For a summary of how the lex Falcidia pertained to this case see Davenport and Manley 2014: 145.

123 Front. Ad M. Caes. 2.16.1.

124 Front. Ad. M. Caes. 2.17, Ad Amicos 1.14. Despite this the necklace seems to have indeed proved contentious, as the jurist Q. Cervidius Scaevola was consulted specifically concerning its fate: Dig. 35.2.26; Davenport and Manley 2014: 145.
did decide to stake the imperial family’s claim indicates that Fronto’s tactic of appealing to a sense of how a cherished woman’s earthly belongings ought to be treated was a successful one.

**Fundraising through Finery: Sextilia and Faustina the Younger**

We are told that at times of crisis during the Republic, Roman matrons donated their jewellery as their contribution to the war effort. Their actions were lauded as being selfless and civic-minded, and particularly so as they were undertaken on the women’s own initiative. In Livy, Valerius Flaccus argues that these prior sacrifices gave cause for the women of his own time to be permitted freedom from the restrictions of the *lex Oppia*, while in Appian’s *Bellum Civile* Hortensia claims that through relinquishing their ornaments matrons during the Punic war became ‘superior to their sex.’ There is a shared belief that the women involved were under no obligation to act as they did, but by choosing to offer support they were able to overcome their feminine weaknesses. Sacrificing luxury items for the greater good also had the effect of displaying one’s virtue – quite literally, as a woman who did so demonstrated that she was immune to the corrupting influence of luxury to which women were especially thought to be susceptible. The symbolism inherent in these accounts has not gone unnoticed. It is clear in both sources that jewellery and other finery are the property which is being relinquished – Valerius Flaccus invokes these events during a debate on women’s rights to these possessions, and Hortensia makes it clear that ‘they contributed voluntarily, not from their landed property, their fields, their dowries, or their houses, without which life is not possible to free women, but only from their own jewellery.’ On a surface reading, jewellery might seem like an obvious choice for this purpose, as other sources mention its consistent value and easy alteration, making it a ready source of transferrable wealth. However, as it is presented in these texts, the decision to give it up was perceived as ripe with meaning by Flaccus and Hortensia as they cited it in their respective disputes. Women, as we are reminded by both speakers, were barred from taking active roles in the political life of Rome. As they had no say in the decisions of the Senate or people, they were considered exempt from any taxing of their wealth for state purposes. It appears that, for the speakers, the ideal approach to women’s personal wealth was

125 Liv.5.24.34; App. B Civ. 4.33.
126 App. B. Civ. 4.33.
128 App. B. Civ. 4.33.
130 Livy 34.7.8; App. B.Civ. 4.32.
that it remained under the jurisdiction of the woman herself and, if necessary, her family.\textsuperscript{131} Senatorial or popular intervention in the form of legislation, as the \textit{lex Oppia} and the law passed by the Second Triumvirate, was seen as intrusive, unfair, and unnecessary when applied to women who took pride in their fidelity to the state. In fact, Hortensia goes so far as to cast the ostensible goodwill of the triumvirs into doubt, as even the leaders of the civil wars that had ravaged Rome had not tried to tax women.\textsuperscript{132} In summation, the ideal circumstances in which a woman sacrificed her personal effects in service of the state and thus proved her virtue were when she did so of her own volition, and the political heads of state themselves had Rome’s best interests at heart. A woman’s choice in this matter was given the same implications as an actual political statement – she could show her devotion to the Republic either by donating, or by declining to do so when she felt that it was for the wrong cause. In the two cases presented to us, supporting a healthy Republic against an external enemy was a praiseworthy act, as was refusing to aid either Caesar or Pompey as they led Roman armies against each other. The thrust of Flaccus’s rebuttal of Cato’s stance is that women’s adornment is actually beneficial to the Roman state and its men, creating a physical display of superiority over subservient states in peacetime, and providing resources during periods of war. A woman might be thought to take pride in the figure she cuts, but the real impact of her wealthy appearance is in how it reflects upon her husband, and how it will come to the aid of him and his fellow citizens when they take up arms.\textsuperscript{133}

Sacrificing jewellery for an undeserving cause, then, was not a praiseworthy act, and the seizure of women’s assets, jewellery included, was seen as tyrannical. The emperor Vitellius is portrayed in an extremely negative manner by Suetonius, who preserves a damming anecdote not found elsewhere.\textsuperscript{134} Although not yet emperor at the time, Vitellius was said to have pawned his mother Sextilia’s pearl earring (plucked out of her ear, no less) to finance his journey to his province of Germania Inferior, where he would be proclaimed emperor by his troops.\textsuperscript{135} His vast outlays on feasts and other luxuries are a recurring motif in ancient sources, characterising him as unsuitable for supreme power, as did his avarice and the cruelty this provoked.\textsuperscript{136} Suetonius writes that the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} Livy 34.7.11-13.
\item \textsuperscript{132} App. \textit{B.Civ}, 4.33.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Fantham et. al 1994: 262.
\item \textsuperscript{134} See Baldwin 1983: 283-5 for a comparison of Suetonius’s almost completely negative portrayal compared to the more forgiving Tacitus and Cassius Dio.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Suet. \textit{Vit}. 7.2; he also moved his wife and children into attic lodgings so that he could rent out their home.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Suet. \textit{Vit}. 10, 13-14; \textit{Tac. Hist}. 2.62-3, 2.87, 3.36; Cass. Dio 64.1.3, 64.2, 64.4. In the introduction to the Life of Elagabalus, the author of the Historia Augusta counts Vitellius as among the very worst emperors (\textit{SHA. Heliogab.}1.1.)
\end{itemize}
cause of Sextilia’s death was not certain, but in both of the rumours he had heard, her son was held responsible:

…when [Vitellius’s] mother died, he was suspected of having forbidden her being given food when she was ill, because a woman of the Chatti, in whom he believed as he would in an oracle, prophesied that he would rule securely and for a long time, but only if he should survive his parent. Others say that through weariness of present evils and fear of those which threatened, she asked poison of her son, and obtained it with no great difficulty.\footnote{Suet. Vit. 14. 5.}

She is presented in our sources as a woman of noble character who found no joy in her son’s elevation to emperor.\footnote{Suet Vit; 3.1; Tac. Hist. 2.64; Cass. Dio 64.4.5.} Although Vitellius does not enjoy a favourable reputation in general, Suetonius is the only writer to accuse him of matricide. It may not be a coincidence that the anecdote about resorting to stealing his mother’s jewellery is also only found in Suetonius’s account. Tacitus and Cassius Dio both write that on Vitellius’s triumphant entry into Rome, he embraced his mother and gave her the title of Augusta.\footnote{Tac. Hist. 2.89; Cass. Dio. 64.4.5.} Such a display of filial piety evidently had no place in Suetonius’s portrait of Vitellius. His seizure of his mother’s property is emblematic of his character according to Suetonius – caring nothing for anyone else’s wellbeing in his pursuit of his own desires.

A foil to Vitellius is found in Marcus Aurelius. A passage possibly originating from Cassius Dio\footnote{Cary includes this passage (Zon.12.1) in the Loeb edition, following Bouissevain (p. 70, n.1). It also appears in SHA. Marc. 17.4-5 and 21.9 - see Adams 2012: 155-184 on the likelihood of sections 15-19 being an interpolation of an earlier text. Eutropius 8.13 also recounts the auction of imperial goods, and Adams believes that he and the author of the Historia Augusta used the interpolation as a common source (p.160).} recounts that the personal belongings of Faustina the Younger were amongst those treasures sold off to the public by her husband in order to raise funds for his war against the Marcomanni. In the four separate mentions of this sale Faustina’s clothing appears three times, and the remaining account refers to vestes, without an indication of their owner.\footnote{Zon. 12.1 ‘ornaments’; SHA. Marc. 17.4 ‘silken gold-embroidered robes’; Eut. 8.13 ‘silk garments belonging to his wife and himself, embroidered with gold’; SHA.Marc.21.9 ‘clothing.’} Although certain details are included or excluded in each account, the repeated appearance of Faustina’s belongings demonstrates that their sale was considered a point of interest for historians. This anecdote is provided as an example of Marcus Aurelius’s magnanimity. The author of the Historia Augusta states that these objects were put up for sale because the emperor ‘could not bring himself to impose any extraordinary tax on the provincials’ after the depletion of the treasury, instead preferring to give up items which had
adorned the imperial palace as well as his wife. Moreover, after the sale had proved more profitable than anticipated, ‘he gave the buyers to understand that if any of them wished to return his purchases and recover his money, he could do so. Nor did he make it unpleasant for anyone who did or did not return what he had bought.’ No mention is made in any of these accounts of Faustina’s attitude towards the sale of her clothing. It is impossible to know whether she approved of this course of action, or perhaps offered them up as her contribution to the war effort, or whether she had no choice in the face of an executive decision made by Marcus. It can be surmised that this is because in this context Faustina and her clothing are of little real concern to the ancient historians – their interest lies in evaluating her husband as a model emperor. By their recounting and lauding his holding of this sale, and stressing the selfless nature of it, Marcus himself is shown to act in a manner reminiscent of the self-sacrificing matrons of the Republic. Faustina stands silently by, lending her prestige to the offered objects but not receiving any glory in turn. The positive treatment of Marcus Aurelius, already obvious, is made even clearer when compared to the condemnation of Vitellius. The judgement of these emperors is based upon their treatment of their female relatives’ personal attire in times of pressing financial need, which probably had a commonality with the accounts of women doing the same during the Republic. The most significant difference is the instigating party, as Sextilia and Faustina are passive or absent in their respective narratives. This does not reflect a historical regression in the ability of women to dispose of their personal belongings, but is rather a reflection of authorial intent. Suetonius wished to illustrate Vitellius’s greed and lack of filial piety, so he is shown as taking aggressive action against his mother. Cassius Dio, the author of the Historia Augusta, and Eutropius all admired Marcus Aurelius, and thus the sacrifice of Faustina’s finery to the greater good of a war against the Marcomanni is one laudable action amongst many.

Severan Decrees: Julia Soaemias and Alexander Severus

During the reign of Elagabalus, his mother Julia Soaemias allegedly turned the ‘little senate, which is a senate of women’ (senaculum, id est mulierum senatum), which previously functioned as a meeting-place for matrons ‘on certain festivals, or whenever a matron was presented with the insignia of a “consular marriage” – bestowed by the early emperors on their kinswomen,

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142 SHA. Marc. 17.4.
143 SHA. Marc. 17.4.
144 For a similar condemnation of Caligula for auctioning his family’s belongings (including jewellery) out of greed, see Suet. Cal. 39 and Cass. Dio 59.21.5-6.
particularly on those whose husbands were not nobles, in order that they might not lose their noble rank,’ into a vehicle for her petty tyranny, where:

…absurd decrees were enacted concerning rules to be applied to matrons, namely, what kind of clothing each might wear in public, who was to yield precedence and to whom, who was to advance to kiss another, who might ride in a chariot, on a horse, on a pack-animal, or on an ass, who might drive in a carriage drawn by mules or in one drawn by oxen, who might be carried in a litter, and whether the litter might be made of leather, or of bone, or covered with ivory or with silver, and lastly, who might wear gold or jewels on her shoes. 145

There have been attempts to discern whether the senaculum was ever a real institution, either as a general meeting of elite matrons or as an actual committee which passed judgement on the dress of Roman women. 146 However, in keeping with the aim of this chapter, it is the historiographical, not historical, significance of its description which will be examined here. The previous mention of the ‘women’s senate’ as an arbiter of sartorial signifiers occurs in Pliny the Elder’s Natural History, where the ranking of valuable gemstones is derived from the ‘senatorial decree’ (senatusconsulto) of the women of Rome. 147 Such a statement should not be taken at face value by any means. Pliny had earlier bemoaned the growing availability of gold jewellery to women not of senatorial or equestrian family, scoffing that if this state of affairs continued then these women would construct a new rank in society for themselves. 148 Women’s desire for conspicuous ornament is regarded as a sort of mania by Pliny, and the ravaging of nature in search of stones which are to be transformed into luxury goods by the decree of society ladies is one of its symptoms. 149 Increased social prominence and visibility might have been the goal of women in reality, but in the written record these ambitions were subject to ridicule as the petty matters with which women concerned themselves in the absence of any capacity to exert political power in the orthodox manner. 150 In the case of Julia Soaemias, her authority in the senaculum is auxiliary to, or possibly a substitute for, her desired influence in the male domain of the senate, the meetings of which she attended openly. 151 As mentioned above, Agrippina the Younger also attended senate meetings, but she was concealed from view. Thus Soaemias has a predecessor in her representation as an overbearing mother pushing the bounds of propriety in her quest for a share in imperial power. The extent of her

145 SHA. Heliogab. 4.3.
146 Berg 2002: 42; Olson 2008: 100-1.
147 Plin. HN. 37.23.
148 Plin. HN. 33.12.
149 Plin. HN. 33.1.
150 Olson 2008: 81.
151 Later in the Life it is Elagabalus’s grandmother Julia Maesa who is said to have done this (SHA. Heliogab. 12.3.)
actual influence during her son’s reign is unclear, but it seems likely that she was at least perceived as a supporter of his unorthodox behaviour.\textsuperscript{152} Her perversity in regards to dress is matched by that of her son. He is depicted as indulging in the worst sartorial offences of several despised rulers. Like Caligula, he dresses up as Venus; like the mythical Assyrian king Sardanapalus, he adopts the costume and customs of women.\textsuperscript{153} Cassius Dio’s account of the emperor’s effeminacy also recalls Nero’s emasculating of Sporus, except that Elagabalus has gone one better and cut out the middleman.\textsuperscript{154} Soaemias’ improper influence and Elagabalus’s weak and unmasculine nature go hand in hand for hostile historians. While the emperor playacts Venus’s role in the Judgement of Paris, his mother is supervising the drafting of senatorial decrees and presiding over her own personal senate.\textsuperscript{155}

The association with dress as a symbol of corruption in the Elagabalan court is thrown into sharp relief in the \textit{Life} of Alexander Severus.\textsuperscript{156} Elagabalus’s successor is repeatedly shown reversing or destroying his bad decisions, and included among these are a proposal to institute categories of dress to demarcate social ranks more clearly (a measure which was moderated by his advisors Ulpian and Paulus),\textsuperscript{157} refusing to outfit actors with expensive costumes,\textsuperscript{158} wearing simple clothing himself and a toga when in Rome and other Italian cities,\textsuperscript{159} and restricting the adornment of the imperial women to:

- one hair-net, a pair of earrings, a necklace of pearls, a diadem to wear while sacrificing, a single cloak ornamented with gold, and one robe with an embroidered border, not to contain more than six ounces of gold. In every way he exercised a censorship on the customs of his age quite in keeping with his own manner of life, for illustrious men followed his example and noble matrons that of his wife.\textsuperscript{160}

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\textsuperscript{152} Icks 2011:19-20 does not believe that Soaemias was afforded much real power, contra Grant 1996: 25. Rowan 2011: 261-7, proposes on the basis of historiographical and numismatic sources that Soaemias was regarded as being associated with Elagabalus’s more suspect activities while her mother Maesa was not, leading to Soaemias being killed along with her son while Maesa survived.
\textsuperscript{153} Icks 2011: 98-9.
\textsuperscript{154} Cass. Dio 80.14.3.
\textsuperscript{155} SHA \textit{Heliogab.} 5.2-5.
\textsuperscript{156} Harlow 2005: 145-6, 150-1.
\textsuperscript{157} SHA. \textit{Alex. Sev.} 27.1-2.
\textsuperscript{158} SHA. \textit{Alex. Sev.} 33.3.
\textsuperscript{159} SHA. \textit{Alex. Sev.} 4.2, 33.4, 40.7-11.
\textsuperscript{160} SHA. \textit{Alex. Sev.} 41.1-2.
\end{flushright}
Both Julia Soaemias and Severus Alexander wished to introduce dress regulations according to status. However, for Severus Alexander this is a demonstration of his concern with social order which had been thrown into chaos under Elagabalus, while Soaemias is criticised for abusing power any way she can get it. The austerity of the imperial house in sartorial matters is partly responsible for a restitution of acceptable Roman mores as his subjects began to emulate his good example. It is possible that Alexander Severus’s overwhelmingly positive reputation in the historiographical tradition is due to much of his power being given to officials who then eulogised his memory, but since he himself did not accomplish much, his achievements adhere to generalised statements of good rulership. This seems especially likely in regards to the praise of his management of the imperial women’s wardrobe, which is associated with the exemplary nature of the imperial house. As seen in the case of Augustus, it was considered praiseworthy to moderate a woman’s dress and thus her behaviour and morality. Alexander Severus’s success in this endeavour was in accord with his portrayal as a good emperor who rejected the excesses of his predecessor.

The passages that have been examined in this chapter are literary representations of the dress of Roman imperial women. Although they appear to convey information about what particular women wore, in fact they are more likely to reflect pre-existing conceptions relating to dress and morality, transposed into an imperial milieu. In this new context these are used to assess not the imperial women themselves but the emperor with which each is associated. An imperial woman’s garments were thereby designated as significant and given special attention by authors who wished to comment upon an emperor. As such, what an imperial woman wore was only worth representing if it could serve a larger purpose in a narrative. Therefore, we should not take textual references to an imperial woman’s dress at face value. They do not represent the reality which unadorned portraits suppress, and equally do not provide a model for portraits which do include adornment. Instead, this analysis of imperial women’s adornment in literature shows the potential of accessories like jewellery as a device through which those who sought to represent imperial women as significant figures in the empire could do so.

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Chapter Two

Jewellery in Imperial Portraiture

Roman portraiture has been characterised as an artistic tradition that was distinctive in its general eschewing of adornment on women. In contrast to the heavily jewelled women upon Etruscan sarcophagi, Palmyrene funerary busts, and Byzantine imperial portraits, the Roman matrons rendered in marble look plainly dressed, and the empresses even more so. The explanation scholars have proposed for this unadorned look, which pervaded female portraiture for the first three centuries of the imperial period, is drawn from both hostility towards female ornamentation revealed in literary sources and from the unique position occupied by the imperial women. There was a particular anxiety in Roman literature directed towards adornment and the corrupting influence it could exert over women who had opportunities to influence the course of the state, with the potential for bribery afforded by baubles posing a risk when offered to women with flexible morals. Therefore, since the senate granted public statues to Octavia and Livia in 35 BC, when tensions between Octavian on one side and Mark Antony on the other were running hot, making a politically charged statement with the women on either side of the conflict treated as figureheads, and since the marble portraits of these women and their successors bear little or no trace of jewellery, the latter has been posited as being due to the former and to the existing negative discourse surrounding female adornment. It would not do for women so close to the princeps to be seen perpetuating the evils that had threatened Rome’s security in the past. Instead they must be presented as virtuous, inviolable, and modest, in the manner of exemplary Romans of the idealised past. The stola became the badge of honour for women instead of jewellery and luxurious clothing, and it is in this garment that imperial women were depicted on several occasions. This was

162 Livy 1.11.6-9 Tarpeia betrays Rome to the Sabines in exchange for their gold bracelets; Livy 34. 4.9-10 Cato the Elder claims that the greedy women of his own time would have gladly accepted the gifts of gold and purple offered by Cineas on behalf of Pyrrhus. See also Sebesta 1997: 531.

163 Statues granted to Octavia and Livia, along with sacrosanctity and freedom from tutela (the latter two honours probably on Octavian’s initiative) Cass. Dio 49.38.1; Flory 1993: 287; Bartman 1999: 62-4; the influence of coming war with Cleopatra and Mark Antony upon this decision Flory 1993: 293-6; Octavia and Cleopatra are consistently characterised as being opposing forces in Plut. Ant. 31.1-2, 35.1-36.4 and 52.1-54.2, with the actions of each influencing Antony’s actions, Octavia keeping him tied to Rome and Cleopatra enticing him away. The statues of 35 BC (which have not been identified, if they still exist) are inferred to be deliberately plain in contrast to the gilded statue of Cleopatra in the temple of Venus Genetrix by Flory 1993: 296.
particularly the case in the Julio-Claudian period, and stolate portraits of imperial women appear on coins during Domitian’s reign (see p.68-70), but its presence had become increasingly rare by the beginning of the second century AD.\textsuperscript{164} It might not have been the case in reality that jewellery was eschewed in the imperial court, but it was the image that was presented to the public at large that mattered, and there jewellery had no place on the imperial body.\textsuperscript{165}

Yet the presence of adornment on some imperial portraits is undeniable. How is this to be explained? In some studies it is passed over altogether, while other, more palatable symbols are dissected and their symbolic value affirmed.\textsuperscript{166} In others, it is seen as a reflection of the real use of luxurious adornment evidenced by literary sources, although, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, there is no reason to suppose that these accounts are themselves unadulterated truth.\textsuperscript{167} Finally, the possibility is offered here that the use of adornment in these portraits is an attempt to draw upon positive messages associated with jewellery, or even to liken these women with goddesses.\textsuperscript{168} However, due to the overwhelmingly negative rhetoric directed towards jewellery, it was necessary to restrict such depictions to works that had a private audience. The consistency of demonstrating the probable deliberations in depicting imperial women in this particular manner appears to have created a dichotomy in scholarship between virtuous Roman womanhood and the self-aggrandisement associated with adornment. That is, there is a particular self-interest attached to the wearing of jewellery, both in Roman moralism and in modern scholarship. The \textit{stola} proclaimed an ideal of femininity that was especially Roman, while there was a persistent thread in Roman literature that jewellery was not only selfish but also alarmingly foreign.\textsuperscript{169} This has led to a dismissal of the role of ornamentation in art for constructing representations of imperial women. The logical assumption is that the suspicion afforded to women wearing jewellery did not encourage its depiction in images that were open to the public gaze.\textsuperscript{170} Therefore, it only appeared in private artworks, and moreover did not serve any great artistic purpose, either showing what imperial women really wore free from propagandistic censorship or revealing the individual’s concern for their own standing in the social competition of conspicuous consumption – or both.

\textsuperscript{164} Julio-Claudian stolate portraits Bartman 1999: 43; Edmondson 2008: 24.

\textsuperscript{165} Treggiari 1975: 48-57 provides a catalogue of the slaves owned by Livia and other women of the imperial family. Livia owned slaves that were responsible for pearl-setting and goldsmithing (55).

\textsuperscript{166} Wood 1999: 196-202.

\textsuperscript{167} Contra Batten 2009: 486-7.

\textsuperscript{168} Berg 2002: 71.

\textsuperscript{169} In addition to the bribery previously mentioned, see also Tac. \textit{Ann.} 3.55; Tiberius complains about ‘the items [jewels] individual to women for which our money is transferred to foreign or enemy peoples.’

\textsuperscript{170} Fejfer 2006: 345-8.
However, when this results in the marginalisation of those adorned images which do exist it shows a tendency to give too much credence to this point of view. A different approach might be to consider these images in the light of recent scholarship which emphasises how women used adornment in their daily life as a social marker of wealth and beauty, resulting in higher social capital. ¹⁷¹ However, while this approach aids in the recognition of the contribution made by these pieces towards the overall representation of imperial women it cannot be indiscriminately applied to artwork without proving flawed. If a piece is regarded as reflecting how a woman appeared in life – that how she appeared in an artistic representation was not affected by factors outside her actual appearance at that moment – then this necessitates the ignoring of scholarship which shows how costume in art was used as a shorthand for a person’s qualities and accomplishments. I will demonstrate that jewellery played a definite role in this schema of symbolic garments. It should be noted here that as this chapter will investigate only adorned sculpture (including glyptic works), Julia Domna’s appearance on the Severan tondo where she wears a pearl necklace and earrings will not be included. Further to this, apart from the tondo, there is no extant example of an imperial woman’s portrait which includes jewellery after the end of the Flavian dynasty. However, there is still sufficient evidence from the Julio-Claudian and Flavian women to support my hypothesis. Finally, although it is possible that jewellery and other adornments were painted onto statuary, since evidence of this is rarely still visible (and none, to my knowledge, appears on imperial portraits), examples of this type of adornment cannot be examined in this thesis.

**The Symbolic Role of Dress in Art**

As in literature, costume in art has been recognised as a means of establishing the wearer’s role within society. A toga, the symbol of a male Roman citizen in his civic role, was potent imagery in both the artistic and literary realms.¹⁷² In the funeral procession of distinguished Romans, men who resembled the deceased wore not only *imagines* with their facial features, but were also fitted out with various permutations of the toga,, in order to make an immediate visual statement of what the deceased had achieved during his lifetime – for example, for someone who had been consul or praetor and had also celebrated a triumph there would be one actor wearing the *toga praetexta* and another the *toga picta*, respectively.¹⁷³ Funerary reliefs of freedmen show liberated slaves commemorating their inclusion into the togate ranks.¹⁷⁴ Examples such as the erection of several statues depicting the same person but in different attire depending upon the desired projection of a

¹⁷¹ Olson 2008: 97-9; Batten 2009: 486-487, 496.
¹⁷² Vout 1996; Davies 2005: 121-3.
¹⁷³ Polyb. 6.53.
¹⁷⁴ Koortbojian 2008: 72-3.
particular aspect of their life show that clothing, despite its basis in reality, became a symbolic element for representation. In some cases the unreality of these representations was made explicit through the reactions of viewers who found it difficult to accept the image being projected. This artificiality of attire in artwork was pointed out in cases where the person depicted was not thought an appropriate bearer of a particular outfit due to their actions. Pliny the Elder met with a problem when he attempted to discover the history of ring-bearing in Rome:

As to the usage followed by the Roman kings, it is not easy to pronounce an opinion: the statue of Romulus in the Capitol wears no ring, nor does any other statue—not that of L. Brutus even—with the sole exception of those of Numa and Servius Tullius. I am surprised at this absence of the ring, in the case of the Tarquinii more particularly, seeing that they were originally from Greece, a country from which the use of gold rings was first introduced.

Much later, a writer of epigrams was said to have remarked that of the five different guises of the elderly emperor Tacitus shown on a panel in the house of the Quintilii, he recognised only the figure in the toga – certainly not the man in the cuirass or the hunting gear.

However, despite this possibility of a recalcitrant viewer appealing to what they saw as reality in order to denounce a portrait they found false, this should not lead us to believe that there was a general desire for representations that were taken from life. There does seem to have been an expectation that a person’s attire would accurately reflect their deeds and personal qualities, but in order to achieve this, it would be necessary for there to be a baseline understanding of what each element signified. That is to say, the objection to Tacitus’s costuming was not an actual statement that the observer had literally never seen him wearing those outfits (although this was probably also true), but that his impression of the emperor did not coincide with the meanings that those garments denoted. Pliny’s objection to the placement of rings on the kings’ statues is based in his understanding of what had transpired in reality, but may also in part be due to his perceptions of the kings in question and of the institution of ring-wearing as ‘the worst crime against mankind.’

Numa Pompilius and Servius Tullius enjoyed good reputations, while the Tarquinii were infamous for the actions which spurred the fall of the monarchy and establishment of the Republic. Yet there is no reason to believe that the creators of the statues in question saw the application of rings to the figures in the same way that Pliny did. Pliny is equally perplexed by the practice of placing rings on

176 Plin. HN. 33.4.
177 SHA. Tac. 16.2-4; Koortbojian 2008: 74; Galinier 2012: 199.
178 Plin. HN. 33.4.
statues of divinities, seeing adornment of this sort as a peculiarly human foible.\textsuperscript{179} It is probable, however, that this was done not because people necessarily believed that their gods wore rings in the same manner that they themselves did. Instead, the initial meaning behind the wearing of such objects, to show that the bearer was someone of importance, should naturally be extended to a deity – why should a human’s image be adorned while a god’s or goddess’s was not? Thus the ring is removed from its context in reality and becomes something of purely symbolic value. This adoption of mortal status symbols in a divine context seems to have generally been perceived as augmenting divine power rather than diminishing it.

There needs to be a reconsideration of the appearance of adornment on imperial statues and the contexts in which it was deployed. There is no need to assume that because jewellery could be perceived negatively that it could not appear outside private circles. It is not certain who owned or displayed the glyptic portraits, although several scholars have posited that they were owned by members of the imperial family.\textsuperscript{180} This is only speculation, however, and furthermore it does not necessarily mean that viewership was restricted to a select few. The possibility should be allowed that cameos and intaglios were viewed by more people than has usually been thought. Further to this, it should also be considered a possibility that adorned statues could be as open to the public gaze as those without jewellery. The adornment that does appear in art of imperial women should be regarded as conveying positive messages about the women who wore it.

\textbf{Rings and Freedwomen}

However, in order to understand how exactly jewellery functioned as a symbol it is necessary to examine how context affected its meaning. Jewellery features repeatedly in Roman funerary art. This is not surprising, as Romans took the preservation of their memories seriously, and funerary art was used as an opportunity to record one’s achievements during life,\textsuperscript{181} frequently through costuming.\textsuperscript{182} As the examination of several reliefs shows, jewellery served a particular purpose for this on portraits of freedwomen. By far the most frequent occurrences of adornment on these are rings worn by freedwomen on the fourth finger of the left hand (figs.1-3).

\textsuperscript{179} Plin. \textit{HN}. 33.6.

\textsuperscript{180} See, for example Jeppesen 1994: 348 which presents the hypothesis that the \textit{Gemma Augustea} was, in turn, commissioned by Augustus, presented to Germanicus, inherited by Agrippina the Elder, and confiscated by Tiberius upon her banishment from Rome.

\textsuperscript{181} Stewart 2008: 65-6.

\textsuperscript{182} Petersen 2009: 192-7 on the use of costume on funerary portraits of freedmen
Fig. 1. Funerary relief of the Aedii. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Fig. 2. Funerary relief of the Vibii. Musei Vaticani, Museo Chiaramonti.
Although this finger was not reserved solely for engagement or wedding rings in the Roman world, it is quite likely that this is what is depicted in these instances. Berg ascribes this phenomenon to the perceived respectability of such rings in comparison to other pieces of jewellery. This, I believe, is only a partial explanation, as I find it unlikely that rings were chosen as adornment *per se* with their connotations only providing a convenient excuse. Instead, considering the prevalence of their inclusion in portraits of *libertae*, I suggest that these women were depicted wearing rings for much the same reason that their husbands were shown wearing togas — as a visual record of their elevation to citizen status. Slaves could not legally marry, despite forming relationships with one

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183 Treggiari 1991: 149.
184 Berg 2002: 34.
185 Puzzlingly the *stola*, also the marker of a married Roman woman, does not appear on any of these reliefs. The braided straps, which aid in its identification could be hidden by the *palla* which is frequently worn in these portraits, but surely if it was thought important it would have been shown anyway. This may appear to be a mark against the function of the rings in these portraits as a signifier of marriage and point instead to their use as signifiers of wealth, but the question still remains why rings were preferred to other items of jewellery. Sempronia on the Servilii relief wears two rings, one on the index finger and the other also on the fourth finger. In these cases it might be that each ring served a separate purpose.
another and referring to these unions in the same manner as an official marriage, though using the term *contubernalis* rather than *coniunx*. Freedom meant that slaves could now form *iusti coniuges* and produce legitimate freeborn children. The importance placed on these new privileges and opportunities form the basis for much of the art featuring freedmen and women. In light of this overarching trend, the prominence afforded to rings (the *pudicitia* pose employed by Vecilia Hila in fig.2 both makes the ring conspicuous and conveys further modesty to the woman thus depicted) in these reliefs served the purpose of commemorating the woman’s status as a Roman citizen and all that this involved – access to a legal marriage, the opportunity to raise children who were themselves citizens, and respectability for herself as a *materfamilias*. Therefore, the ring, itself a potent symbol in reality, became even more important when juxtaposed with such a bearer. Artistic depiction of jewellery in this case is due to deliberate creation and proclamation of identity which was denoted by a particular social symbol. Thus, in these portraits jewellery takes on a representative role which supersedes its physical form. The paucity of freeborn portraits with rings is striking in comparison. A possible reason for this discrepancy is simply that the majority of funerary reliefs do depict freedwomen rather than those that were freeborn. It is also possible, however, that they did not feel the same need to advertise their status in this way, as they would have spent their entire lives knowing that they were entitled to marriage and indeed were expected to marry and produce children. Therefore the use of jewellery upon these reliefs appears to be tied to the subject’s position in society and the influence of this upon their self-image, rather than adornment for adornment’s sake.

**Divine Models**

However, the adornment on imperial portraits does not appear in a posthumous context. For the most powerful women in the empire to proclaim their wealth seems both redundant and petty when considering the numerous other methods of aggrandisement available to them in the artistic sphere, such as similarity to goddesses, and even the basic fact of the visibility of their image throughout the empire. It might be the case that for the imperial women jewellery fulfilled an aesthetic purpose, providing a sense of refinement and beauty. However, when the portraits in which jewellery appears are considered, it becomes clear that there is another factor at play. Jewellery is almost always shown in conjunction with other attributes, often of a divinising nature. One more

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188 Bartman 1999: 44-6; Fejfer 2008: 344 ‘…size, material, setting, and not least, the way in which the statue was honoured (as for example in the imperial cult) could still make a statue of an empress stand out from those of her fellow women.’
portrait of a freedwoman sheds some light on this. The funerary relief of Ulpia Epigone (fig. 4) shows her heavily adorned, wearing a ring, a pendant necklace, and an armlet and bracelet on each arm.

Fig. 4. Funerary relief of Ulpia Epigone, Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano.

D’Ambra, in her article on the use of symbolism in this work, identifies the pendant as a fertility amulet but thinks that the jewellery on the arms is included in order to show the subject as a wealthy and sophisticated woman.\(^189\) This may indeed be the case, but there appears to be an additional factor in how this was achieved. The fertility charm will recur later in this chapter, as it does indeed appear to have been an object that was considered of great symbolic value. Her bracelets and armbands, however, are not so obviously meaningful, and have few parallels in existing sculpture. Spiral bracelets are found on the Townley caryatid (fig.5) - the state of preservation of the Erechtheion caryatids means we cannot know if these were carried over from the originals or were Roman additions - although they are of a different style to Epigone’s single band - while the figure of Roma on the *Gemma Augustea* wears bracelets on both wrists.\(^190\)


\(^{190}\) The caryatid also has sculpted necklaces and earrings. A possible explanation for the ornamentation on the caryatids is found in a passage from Vitruvius ‘[after the capture of Carya] they [the Greeks] sold the women off into slavery, but did not allow them to remove their matronly garments or their jewellery, so that they were led away not just in one triumph but as lasting examples of servitude; weighed down by heavy humiliation, they appeared to serve the sentence for their city. And so there were then architects who chose for public buildings images of these women designed to carry a heavy load so that the notable punishment of the crime of the Caryati would be handed down even to posterity.’
However there is another figure shown with ornamentation on the arms who is more likely to be a model for this work. The semi-nudity and pose of the figure is derived from statues of Venus. D’Ambra has investigated similar portrayals of nude matrons from the same period and reached the conclusion that in these images the nudity functions as a costume which likens the women to Venus in order to emphasise their sexuality and fertility. An examination of Roman representations of Venus (figs.6-7) reveals that there are a number of these which bear armlets, something I have not found on sculptural depictions of other divinities except for the Graces, who attended Venus (fig. 8). The woman shown as Venus in a funerary group with her husband also wears an armlet on both arms in the same fashion (figs.9-10).

(Vitruv. De Arch. 1.5) If the details of this story influenced the creation of this caraytid, it would seem that the recreation of their ornamentation was indeed a propagation of the shame and humiliation inflicted upon the women of Carya – and thus not a likely inspiration for the portrait of Ulpia Epigone. For the use of caryatids in the Forum of Augustus to symbolise the subjugation of the empire, see Ramsby and Severy-Hoven 2007: 50-2; compare also the leading of Zenobia, weighed down by her jewellery, in the triumph of Aurelian (SHA. Tyr. Trig. 30.24-6.)

Fig. 6. Venus d’Arles type, Musée du Louvre.
Fig. 7. Lely’s Venus, British Museum

Fig. 8. The Three Graces, Musée du Louvre.
Figs. 9-10. Funerary group of husband and wife as Venus and Mars, Musée du Louvre.
The heavy symbolism in the relief of Ulpia Epigone is in general directed towards the impression of a fecund, attractive, yet still respectable woman. Her naked torso and deceptively modest pose are allusions to depictions of Venus, particularly the Capitoline type. Adopting the guise of Venus seems to have been especially in vogue during the Flavian and Trajanic periods, from which we find both this relief and several full-body statues showing the heads of matrons on bodies borrowing heavily from established Venus types. D’Ambra has hypothesised that these seemingly incongruous elements in fact work in tandem in order to represent the subject as a woman whose sexuality has been tamed in accordance with Roman mores, with the ordered hair and head tempering the voluptuous body, an effect also seen on Epigone.\textsuperscript{192} Considering that her semi-nudity and lush drapery should be considered as a costume, might not the adornment not yet accounted for be a part of it? Berg shows that adornment was thought appropriate for depictions of Venus.\textsuperscript{193} We know from the account of Pliny the Younger that the statue of Venus in the Pantheon had half of Cleopatra’s pearl placed in each ear, and there are accounts of placing attire on statues which would not necessarily have left a trace in the archaeological record – for example, Galba cheated his patron goddess Fortuna out of a fabulous necklace when he became emperor, instead giving it to Capitoline Venus.\textsuperscript{194}

**Jewellery, Fertility, and Women of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty**

Therefore it is possible that similar portrayals of mortal women took cues from depictions of goddesses in regards to their adornment as part of their costume. The addition of this jewellery to divine figures probably derived from the connotations they had received from their use in reality, but in works where it is clear that divine assimilation was intended and there are instances of the deity being depicted with the same adornment, it seems more likely that this was the deciding factor rather than the actual dress of the woman herself. As suggested before, it is imperative to note that jewellery is never the sole attribute shown. Instead, it is combined with wreaths, stephanes, and cornucopiae in order to create a multi-layered representation of the subject. Therefore jewellery seems out of place in conjunction with these attributes that bear divinising connotations if it is perceived as a symbol of material affluence. Instead, Berg’s suggestion that in this context, jewellery itself took on the property of divine attribute is worth further consideration.\textsuperscript{195} First I will

\textsuperscript{192} D’Ambra 1993: 110; D’Ambra 2000: 112-4.

\textsuperscript{193} Berg 2002: 64.

\textsuperscript{194} Plin. *HN*. 9.58; Macr. *Sat*. 3.17.18.; Suet. *Galb*. 18. The necklace was meant to be placed on his statue of Fortuna (*ad ornandum*). Although the language is not clear whether it was given to Venus to be worn or was simply dedicated in her temple, the former does not appear to be unlikely.

\textsuperscript{195} Berg 2002: 71.
look at a cameo which shows a woman tentatively identified as Livilla, daughter of Drusus Maior and Antonia Minor, and wife of Drusus Minor, in which she is adorned with jewellery and various, though ideologically consistent, attributes (Fig. 11). ¹⁹⁶

![](image)

**Fig. 11. Cameo of Livilla. Staatlische Museen, Berlin.**

This cameo shows a bust-length portrait of a woman wearing a necklace, along with a wreath of wheat ears and poppies, holding a sceptre, and accompanied by two infants. These children are not depicted as part of the same dimension as the woman – she does not hold them or interact with them in any notable way. Instead, they are represented in a symbolic manner which enables them to be read as equivalent to pairs of twins which had previously appeared in Roman art – Romulus and Remus, Castor and Pollux, and perhaps most pertinently, the two children nurtured by the female figure on two masterpieces of early imperial art – the *Ara Pacis Augustae* and the *Gemma Augustea*. This is not to suggest that the inclusion of these children is solely a symbolic gesture – it is known that Livilla gave birth to twin boys in AD 19 and this would certainly have been a cause for commemoration amongst her supporters, as Tacitus would later insinuate that their birth placed Livilla on equal footing with the famously fecund Agrippina the Elder. ¹⁹⁷ Yet in this medium the


¹⁹⁷ Tac. Ann. 2.43, 2.84.
individual boys themselves could only signify so much – by presenting the opportunity to associate
them with mythological figures their potential as princes would have been more effectively
conveyed to the viewer. Their similarity to the children on the Gemma Augustea and the Ara Pacis
relief is not a coincidence, and nor should the similarity in ornament between these maternal figures
of Livilla and Tellus be regarded as such. As noted above, Ulpia Epigone wears an identical
necklace on her funerary portrait and this has been regarded as a symbol of her fertility. Tellus
wears yet another of these pendant necklaces on the Gemma Augustea (Fig. 12).

Fig. 12. Detail of the Gemma Augustea, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

It has been suggested that these are bullae, the protective charm worn by young Roman boys, here
transferred to a woman to signify her appropriation of masculine power.198 This hypothesis has not
won universal approval, and I also find little to support it.199 To begin with, it does not resemble
definite representations of bullae found in sculpture, such as those on the Ara Pacis frieze and a
statue of the young Nero (fig. 13) – it is not circular and has a much shorter drop. Any objections on

199 Flory 1995: 62, n.68 provides an overview of the arguments for and against the bulla identification.
this account regarding limitations imposed by the length of cameo portraits can be dismissed by looking at a clear depiction of the same sort of pendant on two full-length figures, that which is commonly identified as Tellus on the Gemma Augustea, and that of Ulpia Epigone which is discussed above.

Fig.13. Statue of the young Nero wearing a bulla (detail), Musée du Louvre.

The bulla hypothesis is also unconvincing as it implies that these women could only take on a positive dynastic symbolism by appropriating masculine symbols for their use. Berg thinks it a usurpative act on Agrippina’s behalf in order to gain influence by presenting herself in a masculine manner, in accordance with how she is shown in the Annals.\(^\text{200}\) Ascribing to this theory requires either that Tacitus’s description of her behaviour and dress is the truth (risky, considering his animosity towards her) and this is a veristic portrayal; or that its presence is an artistic conceit and thus raises the possibility that even in private portrayals there was a symbolic significance accorded to dress. I do not dispute that accoutrements associated with the male sphere were included in portraits of women – such as the statue of Cloelia previously discussed - in order to convey particular attributes (and vice versa), but in those cases the identification of the items is beyond reasonable doubt.\(^\text{201}\) Flory, who has also noted the similarity between the pendant on the Gemma

\(^{200}\) Berg 2002: 71.

Augustea and the imperial portraits, draws attention to the existence of a sapphire pendant now in the Fitzwilliam Museum which is also a teardrop/heart shape, and sees a possible connection between this stone and the paneros mentioned by Pliny the Elder, hypothesises that the pendants seen on the imperial cameos represented fertility charms.\textsuperscript{202} If this was indeed its purpose, the inclusion of such pendants on these figures, with their emphasis on the fecundity of women and personifications depicted, is rendered explicable. Should we therefore conclude, because such pendants existed and were associated with fertility, that the subject of the portrait was wearing one when the cameo was conceived? However, the existence of such an object does not necessarily mean that it was included in the representation of Livilla because she wore one. The overall message imparted by this cameo is one of fertility, maternity, and the resulting good fortune of the imperial family. The necklace’s appearance on the Gemma Augustea on a divine figure also conveying these messages implies that it was regarded as a symbol through which such a message was constructed, like the cornucopia of Fortuna or the crown and sceptre of Ceres. It is therefore more appropriate to regard its appearance on the Agrippina cameo as part of an established pattern of denoting the wearer as the protector and propagator of the imperial dynasty through their fecundity. It may be enough that such an explicit connection existed. These pendants may well have assumed the same symbolic meaning as the corona spicea, cornucopia, and twin boys that are also depicted in the portraits.\textsuperscript{203} The overwhelming message is one of fertility and abundance, which are guaranteed by the maternal nature of the woman.

Another cameo shows a standing female figure carrying a cornucopia and wearing earrings as well as yet another pendant (fig. 14). This also has been tentatively identified as a portrait of Livilla, and if this is the case, there is a clear parallel between this piece and the Berlin cameo.


Along with a cameo in the Bibliothèque Nationale which appears to be either Messalina or Agrippina the Younger (discussed below, see fig. 22), these portraits also demonstrate a consistent iconographical programme for the depiction of imperial women who had produced potential heirs to the empire, in which adornment clearly played a significant role. Its repeated appearance in conjunction with symbols of fertility and abundance is a sharp contrast against the Stoic Seneca the Younger’s association of women who adorned themselves with those who considered their pregnancies an embarrassment to be hidden, or even those who availed themselves of abortion, presumably to retain their figures or to conceal unchastity. To Seneca, too much attention to

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204 Identification as Livilla: Megow 1987; Mikocki 1995.
205 Sen. Helv. 16.3-7.
one’s physical appearance was both womanly weakness and antithetical to how a Roman matron ought to behave – it is illuminating that his paragon of motherhood is Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, who was said to have embarrassed a guest too boastful about her belongings with the famous line referring to her sons, ‘these are my jewels.’ Adornment and ideal motherhood are not seen to coexist in these passages. Yet these artworks treat jewellery as an integral part of the image of women who were not only responsible for the propagation of the imperial family but who could also assume a maternal role for the empire as a whole. An intaglio in the Bibliothèque Nationale shows an older woman, identified either as Livia or Antonia the Younger, veiled, wreathed, carrying a cornucopia, and wearing a necklace with numerous small pendants (fig. 15). Yet again there is the recurrence of symbols associated with Ceres and Fortuna, and evidence that it was not thought inappropriate to include fashionable necklace in a portrait on one of the great matresfamilias of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Indeed, the views held by Seneca were not the only view of adorned women’s maternal qualities. Artemidorus writes in his interpretation of the meaning of clothing in dreams:

Necklaces, chains, earrings, precious stones, and every kind of women’s neck-jewellery means good luck for women. They prophesy marriage for those who are unmarried, children for those who are childless and an increase of property and great wealth for those who already have husbands and children. For just as women are adorned by their jewellery, they will be adorned in the same way by husbands, children, and wealth.

206 Val. Max. 4. 4. Praef.
209 Artem. 2. 5.
Fig. 15. Amethyst intaglio of Livia or Antonia carrying a cornucopia and wearing a necklace. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Médailles.
After Livilla, the next women to be depicted adorned on cameos were the sisters of Caligula. The familial similarity in physiognomy which was exaggerated for dynastic purposes in art makes it extremely difficult to determine with any certainty which of the three sisters is shown during this period of production, although Wood has made an admirable attempt.\textsuperscript{210} At least four cameos show a sister of Caligula (possibly Drusilla, his favourite), who is laureate, with fillet-like ties, wearing small, teardrop-shaped earrings (figs. 16-17).\textsuperscript{211}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{cameo.jpg}
\caption{Cameo of a sister of Caligula, British Museum.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{210} Wood 1995: 464-471.
\textsuperscript{211} Megow 1987: 302-3, cat. D35, D36, D37, D38.
An immediately obvious change from the preceding examples is that this woman does not wear a necklace of any kind. There is still some similarity with the cameos detailed previously. The earrings are of the same style, and while the wreaths are not, this may be explained by some extent by the circumstances under which these images were produced. Livilla, as shown by the two children present, had recently produced two more members of the ruling dynasty, and was therefore a fitting bearer of Ceres’s crown; while the sisters of Caligula also depended upon their ability to propagate the Julio-Claudian line, at that early stage only Agrippina the Younger had done so. It may be that these cameos, if they are of Drusilla, were produced upon the pronouncement that she had been named as Caligula’s heir, and the laurel wreath was intended to invoke the idea (though probably not the strict reality) of Drusilla as the holder of imperium, or perhaps also a hope for future procreation.212 Therefore although both these cameos and the one of Livilla were intended to commemorate changes in status within the imperial family, these changes were of different natures, and were under different circumstances. Livilla was of course politically and dynastically important as the daughter-in-law of the reigning emperor, but Drusilla’s status, as heir of the emperor, had eclipsed hers, and technically that of every other imperial woman. The similarity of these pieces would seem to indicate that they were produced as a concentrated attempt at gaining or showing support for Drusilla, either within the imperial court or more widely.213 Therefore as these pieces

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212 Flory 1995: 45-7 provides an overview of the numerous hypotheses concerning the presence of laurel wreaths on women of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

213 Generally cameos are regarded by scholars as gifts which were circulated among the imperial family and their associates: Ginsburg 2006: 91 (but note Kampen’s rebuttal in her completion of this work); Fejfer 2008: 171-2; Stewart
were probably made to appeal to a wider audience, instead of simply reflecting the interests of an individual, it can be argued that the earrings, along with the vittae and laurel wreath, would have been expected to meet with approval, rendering the images effective for the purpose of enhancing the profile of the woman so depicted.

Although the majority of portraits where jewellery is visible are glyptic images, it was not confined to this form. As mentioned earlier, it was not only mortal women who had their images adorned with attachments of real jewellery. Augustus’s dedication of Cleopatra’s pearl to the statue of Venus in the Pantheon is well-known;214 Suetonius foreshadows Galba’s fall as he reneged on the promise of a necklace to his patron goddess Fortuna, who consequently abandoned him; and Ovid exhorted the Roman women who were celebrating the Veneralia to remove necklaces and other riches from the cult statue before its ritual bathing.215 Archaeological remains also attest to the practice of placing earrings upon statues of goddesses. Although we cannot be sure what motivated this in all cases, a thanksgiving or a desire to display the beneficial qualities of the goddess could be possible reasons. Divinities who show evidence of attached jewellery include Eirene holding the child Ploutos, a statue of Fortuna Huiusce Diei dedicated by Quintus Lutatius Catulus after the battle of Vercellae, and a Venus Genetrix from the Augustan period (figs. 18-20).216

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2008: 121. D’Ambra 1998: 148-9, ‘cameos, a medium associated with the imperial court since the Julio-Claudians in the first century, are thought to have been gifts commemorating anniversaries or the assumption of offices or priesthoods among the imperial family or their circle…gifts circulating as tokens of respect, gratitude or affection.’ However, given the importance accorded to Drusilla during Caligula’s reign, both before and after her death, it is also quite possible that these were produced under private initiative by wealthy Romans outside the immediate imperial family.

214 According to Cassius Dio 51.22.3, Cleopatra’s other ornaments were also placed throughout Rome’s temples, but it is not mentioned whether these also made their way on to statues or not.


Fig. 18. Eirene and Ploutos (detail), Munich Glyptothek.
Fig. 19. Head of Fortuna *Huiusce Diei*, Capitoline Museums, Centrale Montemartini.
The fostering of wealth by peace might be shown to manifest itself by the attachment of jewellery to the figure of Eirene, making a clear visual statement of the beneficial relationship between the two. The Venus Genetrix might have had earrings added due to the tendency to portray Venus as an adorned goddess, or Augustus’s act of dedication could have inspired others to follow suit, particularly on statues which showed the progenitor of his family. Dedicating jewellery to Fortuna seems to have been an accepted practice, further supporting my theory that jewellery on cameo portraits of imperial women with attributes also borne by Fortuna were part of the overall
costume.\textsuperscript{217} If these statues were adorned due to a desire to show gratitude or a means of gaining divine favour it is not impossible that similar concerns governed the adornment of imperial statues. One such instance is found on the statue of a sister of Caligula, probably Drusilla and thought to have been modified after her death and divinisation (fig. 21).\textsuperscript{218} It is not certain whether the earring holes were added at the time of modification or were already present, but evidently in either case it was not felt inappropriate for inclusion on a \textit{diva}’s image. Caligula made the worship of Drusilla mandatory upon her death but it was made clear from the start of his reign that his sisters were to be accorded special honour.\textsuperscript{219}

![Fig.21. Marble head of Drusilla, in the collection of Prince Heinrich von Hessen.](image)

The possibility still remains, however, that these portraits are representations of Agrippina the Younger, and a possible explanation for their production and circulation is proposed here. Flory suggests that the laurel wreath, which is a constant over these cameos, takes on the connotations of fecundity and its benefits for Rome when placed in a female imperial context.\textsuperscript{220} Such a meaning is consistent with Caligula’s public treatment of his sisters on his accession, very likely due to the

\textsuperscript{217} Plin. \textit{HN}, 37. 2 tells the story of Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos, who sought (unsuccessfully) to mollify Fortuna by sacrificing a ring with a precious stone, generally believed to be a sardonyx. This very stone was then said later to have been dedicated to Concordia by Augustus.

\textsuperscript{218} Wood 1995: 475.

\textsuperscript{219} Cass. Dio

\textsuperscript{220} Flory 1995: 59-60.
small size of the imperial family at this point. The three women were explicitly linked to the security and well-being of the empire, which as women they could only guarantee through exemplary behaviour, which included the bearing of potential heirs. Agrippina the Younger had given birth to a son, the future emperor Nero, at the end of 37. This potential successor would have strengthened Agrippina’s influence in the court, as is perhaps reflected in the production of a cameo thought to depict Agrippina, wearing a necklace, alongside Nero and a female figure, possibly Dea Roma (Fig. 22).  

Ginsburg has noted the depiction of Agrippina here as belonging to a Caligulan portrait type, and also perhaps reminiscent of her appearance at the time of Nero’s birth. Both Ginsburg and Trillmich assume this image to have been produced during Claudius’s reign, with the purpose of promoting Nero’s claim to the empire, either on Claudius’s initiative or Agrippina’s, respectively. The argument for a Claudian date rests upon the laurel wreath Agrippina wears denoting her as the Augusta and wife of an emperor; however, laurel wreaths, as we have seen, also appear on the cameos of Caligulan date, despite the possible subjects lacking these qualifications. Instead, as in the case of those images, it is a possibility that these depictions were intended to

Fig. 22. Sardonyx cameo, possibly of Agrippina the Younger, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Médailles.


influence the viewer’s thoughts about the person depicted, rather than to be a veristic depiction of their status.\textsuperscript{224} Therefore, the reason behind the choice of an earlier portrait type may be as simple as an earlier production date during Caligula’s reign, as Wood believes.\textsuperscript{225} The greater extravagance of this piece in comparison to those of Drusilla, both in its production and context, may reflect Agrippina’s lack of her sister’s position, considering art’s function as a shaper of reality rather than simply a mirror. It may have been thought necessary to emphasise Agrippina’s assets in this way to privilege her over her competition. In the uncertain situation regarding an heir after Drusilla’s death, the emergence of support for a close relative of the emperor who had a son is plausible. In the event, Agrippina and her sister Julia Livilla were exiled in AD 39, ostensibly for consorting with Drusilla’s widower M. Aemilius Lepidus and planning to kill Caligula.\textsuperscript{226} According to Cassius Dio, after their exile Caligula divorced Lollia Paulina and married the pregnant Caesonia, while ‘many trials were being brought against [the people of Rome], as a result of the friendship they had shown toward his sisters and the men who had been murdered.’\textsuperscript{227} The lack of male relatives who could claim the throne therefore may have helped to remove direct challenges to Caligula’s supreme position, but did not eliminate the possibility of opposition conducted through his sisters’ positions as members of the imperial family. Caligula seems to have realised this, forbidding the conferring of honours on any of his relatives after Agrippina and Julia Livilla’s exile, ‘since many honours had been voted earlier to his sisters manifestly on his act.’\textsuperscript{228} The singular position in which the women of the imperial family were placed regarding their public profile and dynastic politics throughout the four years of Caligula’s reign provides an explanation for the production of images bearing jewellery possibly lends credence to this theory.

**Adorned Portraits of Julia Titi**

The last known examples of jewellery on imperial cameos are found in depictions of Julia, the daughter of Titus, all of similar style with perhaps an intaglio by an artist named Euodos the original work (fig. 23).\textsuperscript{229}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[224] Stewart 2008: 40.
\item[226] Suet. *Cal.* 24.3; Cass. Dio 59.22.6-8; Winterling 105-7 on Agrippina’s political manoeuvring after the birth of Nero, and the conspiracy as a reaction to the birth of Julia Drusilla.
\item[227] Cass. Dio 59. 23.7-8; Wardle 1998: 122 on the divorce from Lollia and marriage to Caesonia.
\item[228] Cass. Dio 59.22.9.
\end{footnotes}
Fig. 23. Intaglio of Julia Titi with modern setting, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Médailles.

Again, Julia is not shown as a wholly mortal woman. The stephane she wears behind her fashionable hairstyle demonstrate that she was regarded as akin to a goddess. No other divine attributes are to be found, rendering the object of any intended assimilation uncertain. These crescent-shaped crowns are found in depictions of Juno, Artemis, and Venus, and I think the latter the most likely candidate. There does seem to be a consistent link between Julia and Venus which appears on coinage and statuary, and also in literature.\textsuperscript{230} Martial writes of a statue of Julia holding an attribute of Venus that her beauty specifically exceeded that of the goddess.\textsuperscript{231} It is almost certain that these literary laudations are continuations of a mindset to exalt Julia either during her lifetime

\textsuperscript{230} D’Ambra 1993: 108.

\textsuperscript{231} Mart. 6.13.
or after her death, one result of which was this intaglio. As in the case of Caligula, the small size of the dynasty magnified the importance accorded to the women of the family. This scrutiny led to hostile accounts of Domitia’s lasciviousness and her expulsion from the imperial palace, as well as Julia’s incest with her uncle resulting in a fatal abortion - or, as we have just seen, praise, directed at Domitian, for her beauty and virtue.\textsuperscript{232}

This portrait type of Julia seems to have been a popular choice for imitation, as several smaller intaglios exist which adhere to the same overall appearance in terms of physiognomy (in varying degrees of artistic merit) and costume. Although in one instance the earrings and necklace do not appear, their retention in the majority of cases indicates that they were regarded as important factors in the overall iconography of the piece. The style of the jewellery itself seems to have been considered less important, as on one intaglio the intricacy of Euodos’s work is abandoned in favour of simplistic circles approximating a string of pearls. In this it follows the treatment of the scrollwork on the stephane. While a diligent crafts-person such as Euodos took care to craft each element, imbuing it with a realistic aspect, others in their reproductions took the overall feeling of the piece into consideration. Thus I surmise that the jewellery was usually understood as an important element in the treatment of Julia as an exalted figure. It is interesting to note that another feature included by Euodos in his portrait, that of the \textit{stola} with its characteristic braided straps, is not included in any of these other depictions. It may be that this portrait was created when Julia was alive, perhaps, as Vollenweider suggests, from life, and therefore the inclusion of a garment firmly associated with the mortal realm was considered appropriate.\textsuperscript{233} It should however be remembered that the \textit{stola}, even though it too was worn in reality, had also taken on symbolic associations and its visual appearance was as able to invoke the image of a respectable matron.\textsuperscript{234} Therefore it was not impossible for artists to show earthly attributes in conjunction with divine ones. It could also be the case that actual jewellery was used as a reference for the artist, but again this does not necessarily mean that it was included solely for veristic purposes. However, the presence of the \textit{stola} itself does not necessarily indicate that this was a faithful rendering of Julia’s actual attire. Coins issued by Domitian honouring his deceased mother Domitilla prominently feature a \textit{stola}, as do those of his wife Domitia and one of Julia (figs. 24-26).


\textsuperscript{234} Ov. \textit{Ars. Am.} 1.32-3.
Fig. 24. *RIC* 157. Denarius of Domitilla, struck under Domitian at Rome. Obverse: DIVA DOMITILLA AVGVSTA; Reverse: FORTVNA AVGVST[A].

Although this is the only example of a stolate Julia in Domitian’s coinage, it is one more than is found in the coinage of Titus. The impossibility of Domitilla’s costume being taken from life shows that there was some artistic license involved in the creation of this portrait. Furthermore, Domitilla’s consecration as a *diva*, commemorated with the issuing of these coins, demonstrates that superhuman status was not incompatible with mortal garb. It seems too much of a stretch to posit that Domitian’s revival of the *lex Julia de adulteriis* provided the backdrop for the creation of the coin portraits, as Domitian assumed the office of censor (and soon after censor *in perpetuo*) in AD 85, while the metal content of these coins dates them to AD 82-3. However, the sudden revival of stolate portraits does seem to indicate some sort of statement about the new regime. Domitian (or possibly Titus) obviously thought it was in his best interests to elevate his own standing by having a *diva* for a mother. The importance accorded to her as well as to Domitia and Julia in respect to their roles in the family is borne out by these issues. Domitia was placed on the reverse of these coins with Domitian on the obverse, presenting the two as a partnership, while Julia was matched with the deified Titus and, to make the connection between the two obvious, was accompanied by a legend naming her as his daughter. Her connection to her father was maintained throughout her coin portraits through her facial features. Thus it is possible also to consider the inclusion of the *stola* on the intaglio as a continuation of its revived importance under Domitian and the importance of his female relatives.

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235 Wood 2010: 49.
The similarity of this portrait to a marble portrait of Julia in the Getty Museum (discussed below, see fig.29) is another sign pointing to the depiction of Julia as a deliberate concoction intended to portray her in a manner akin to a goddess, though in this case maintaining her mortal aspect. An equivalent amount of adornment is found on the marble head, so is it to be assumed that the intaglio shows her as she would have appeared in reality and this somehow found its way into public art? Or is it more likely that this demarcation between public and private modes of costume portrayal is a false dichotomy and that in both portraits adornment is used as a tool to create a desired representation of Julia? Several copies of this intaglio were made and in the main retain the same iconography except for the *stola*, which does not appear at all. In most cases the jewellery was replicated although not with the same level of detail, and in some cases in a different style altogether. I surmise that in these instances jewellery was felt to be intrinsic to the portrait, but not the particular jewellery that was shown on the original. Therefore once the portrait had passed into replication, the use of jewellery as a symbol becomes clearer. Evidently it was not felt important that the jewellery in the original image was replicated exactly. Instead it might be that the divine aspect was the most important part of the portrait (as the *stephane* is always reproduced) and that at least some of the time adornment was thought an appropriate accompaniment. It is not made explicit which goddess Julia is likened to, but a possible candidate is Venus. The coin issues *RIC* 386, 387, and 388 associate Julia with Venus (fig.27).

Fig. 27. *RIC* 386. Denarius of Julia, struck under Titus by a mint at Rome. Obverse: IVLIA AVGVSTA TITI AUGVSTI F[ILIA]; Reverse VENVS AVG[VSTA(E)].
Moreover, the stephane is of a type shown on several representations of Venus, and the scrollwork on the intaglio by Euodos could also evoke that goddess.\textsuperscript{237} Coins minted by Sulla during the first century BC show Venus wearing a stephane, earrings, and a short necklace in the same manner as Julia (Fig. 28). Venus was not the only deity to be depicted in such a way, but the existence of such a representation adds credence to the identification when considered alongside the existing association between her and Julia.

![Fig. 28. RRC Cornelia 33. Denarius of L. Cornelius Sulla, minted at Rome. Obverse: head of Venus; reverse: double cornucopiae.](image)

An impressive portrait head of Julia Titi in the Getty Villa shows her wearing a large stephane with insets which probably would have held actual gemstones (Fig.29).\textsuperscript{238} In addition to this she has the holes in her earlobe which signify the former attachment of earrings, and, what is especially intriguing, holes on either side of her neck which probably once have held a necklace. The drawing up of her palla over the back of her head would have prevented the placement of a necklace around her throat. This raises the question of how many other statues might have had necklaces placed upon them which have not left this sort of trace.

\textsuperscript{237} Galinsky 1992: 463-468.

\textsuperscript{238} Mikocki 1995: 190 proposes an assimilation with Juno.
This particular portrait could be a posthumous representation of Julia to mark her divinisation, in contrast to the more modest depiction now in the Palazzo Massimo (Fig. 30), and a portrait head in
the Palazzo Altemps which has pierced earlobes, but otherwise is nowhere near as ostentatious (Fig. 31).
The veneration of Julia after her death, and her continued importance to the Flavian dynasty is demonstrated by Martial’s claim that the Flavian dynasty would remain glorious so long as, among other things ‘the Roman matron, with suppliant voice and incense, shall propitiate the sweet divinity of Julia,’ and his hope that Domitian and Domitia would produce a son, who would be under the protection of Julia, imagined as a Fate spinning out the threads of the child’s life.\textsuperscript{239} The extraordinary aspects of this rendition are thrown into relief by their uniqueness in the public portraiture of Julia. Coins minted under Titus show his daughter, demonstrating her importance at that point in time, but in these she is always shown in mortal guise despite her association with Venus. Therefore, for Julia to be represented in the way she is in the Getty portrait is a result of the elevated station she reached after her death, part of which was adornment in conjunction with more

\textsuperscript{239} Veneration of Julia, Mart. 9.3; Julia as a Fate, Mart. 6.3.
unambiguously divine attributes, and in this new context creating an image of a divine protector of the Flavian dynasty. Julia’s particular role in this imagined scenario was as the guardian of Domitian and Domitia’s hoped-for son, and thus again there is an emphasis on the maternal role of imperial women which does not appear to have been incompatible with adornment.

Thus it seems that it was not the case that jewellery in gem portraits was indicative of actual jewellery worn as an item of fashion, or a manifestation of the connotations of such jewellery as it was worn by Roman women. Instead, it appears to have been utilised as an aspect of divinisation, a conclusion reached due to its consistent appearance in conjunction with other attributes of this sort. In numerous cases a particular style of pendant is found. This is very likely to represent a fertility amulet, the existence of which is attested by archaeological and textual evidence. However, it is probable that the object which is depicted has taken on a significance greater than its existence through its inclusion in these portraits. Its appearance on a divine figure on the Gemma Augustea indicates that it was recognised as an artistic symbol of fecundity and motherhood. The practice of divine assimilation relies upon a visual language which needed to be understood by the majority of viewers.

This chapter demonstrates that by looking at the use of clothing in art generally, it is clear that in the main a costume, or elements thereof, was deliberately chosen in order to convey qualities that were associated with a garment upon its bearer. Even when a particular object could have negative connotations in a particular context, this did not prevent its use, even on works that were visible to all. The dichotomy of what was acceptable in ‘public’ and ‘private’ art is an arbitrary one which does not hold up to scrutiny, as there is no appreciable difference between what is shown in different media. Therefore the use of ornamentation in the portraiture of Roman women, wherever it appears, should be considered as a further example of this sartorial symbolism which takes on nuanced meanings dependent upon other elements of the image. It is impossible to separate adornment from the context in which it appears, the person who wears it, and their position within society. Regarding the adorned imperial portraits, these factors, in the main, have the outcome of seeing the jewellery therein as not only symbols in their own right but also important factors in creating an overall image of imperial women as benefactors to the empire through their fecundity and maternity. These works consistently portray their subjects as guarantors of the empire’s wellbeing, which was achieved through the bearing of children. For jewellery to appear on such images shows that the discourse of women weakening the safety of the state by accepting bribes of jewellery, or neglecting their maternal duties in favour of fashionable dress, was by no means the dominant discourse in the artistic sphere. However, this portrayal of the imperial women as maternal benefactors to society was not achieved through jewellery alone. The message is made
more emphatic through other items with complimentary meanings, often involving the assimilation of these women to goddesses, demonstrating the crucial role of divine attributes in creating the visual portraiture of imperial women.
Chapter Three

Divine Attributes in Imperial Portraiture

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was a relatively common occurrence for members of the imperial family to be depicted in conjunction with the attributes of gods, goddesses, and divine personifications. Attributes could be handheld items, wearable items like crowns or wreaths, or even a separate being altogether such as an animal. Some were exclusive to one particular deity, while others seem to have been more generic in nature. Showing a person with a divine attribute thus had the effect of creating an association between this individual and a god or gods. This visual assimilation of mortals to deities was a Greco-Roman phenomenon which was especially common in depictions of Hellenistic and Roman rulers and their families, but also appeared in portraits of private individuals. This chapter will investigate the appearance of divine attributes in representations of imperial women, and the principles behind their use in this context.

The purpose of divine assimilation has previously been perceived as an attempt at flattery, but is now generally thought to be metaphorical in nature, showing the subject as being in possession of the qualities of the deity associated with the attribute(s). Therefore, since it was not actually a straightforward matter of identification between god and mortal that was intended, it was possible for the attributes of several deities to appear on the one figure. This phenomenon will be one of the aspects of assimilation examined in this chapter, as Mikocki, the author of the most exhaustive study of the assimilation of imperial women to goddesses, has postulated that by the beginning of the third century AD the practice had deteriorated to the point that the attributes of several disparate goddesses were attached to one woman, in contrast to the greater restraint and coherency that had previously prevailed. I believe that this viewpoint is flawed in several respects. First, the presence of multiple associations had existed since the Hellenistic period, and does not appear to have fallen out of favour in the intervening centuries. Second, as mentioned above, the metaphoric purpose of assimilation meant that such images were completely within the bounds of normal practice, and almost certainly would not have posed a problem to contemporary viewers.

240 Tondria 1948: 12. Although Tondria’s article focusses upon Hellenistic queens and princesses, he extends his understanding of the process to its practice during the Roman imperial period.


I also wish to challenge Zanker’s assertion that, unlike that found on portraits of men of the imperial family:

‘…the purpose of [divine assimilation for imperial women]…was not so much to express through the comparison specific qualities attributed to the subject (as in the Greek world), as to stress the association of the various goddesses with the imperial family.’

It is true that the range of deities who were referenced in the assimilations of imperial women was a restricted one in comparison to those found in private consecrations, with almost all bringing forth associations with fertility, motherhood, and well-being. These, of course, all bore significant meaning for the imperial family and, by extension, the empire. However, simply because these associations were relevant to the family does not mean that they were not also considered with the woman herself in mind. An examination of instances of assimilation shows, in my opinion, that the deity referenced was frequently chosen depending on factors pertaining to the individual woman and the context in which her image appeared. Consequently it is unlikely that the personal qualities of a particular woman (or at least the perception of such) were not of importance for such representations. Furthermore, if it were only the association between a goddess and the imperial house that was at stake, it was possible to make such a claim through the addition of the epithets Augusta or Augusti, or even to show the emperor himself with the attributes of the goddess, and thus have no need to bring a female relative into the matter at all. Onomastic assimilation of an imperial personage to a deity was a common practice, and is borne from similar motivations and purpose, but it manifests quite differently due to the different media. Often only one deity is referenced in each instance, and it is in longer-form addresses that a multifarious picture emerges. Images, however, can incorporate these disparate concepts with relative ease. Clark, concerning the use of attributes on Roman republican coinage, writes that in contrast to identifying legends, attributes tended to limit the range of meanings that could be read into a divine figure’s appearance. For example, a head on the obverse of a coin accompanied by the legend LIBERTAS was more adaptable to different understandings of the concept of liberty than was the same head juxtaposed with a pileus, the cap worn by freed slaves. The exception, notes Clark, was when ‘attributes belong to more than one deity or…could be represented with a different deity in order to broaden the range of concepts evoked.’ These exceptions tend to form the rule with regard to their use on imperial coinage.

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244 Zanker 1988: 234.
portraits. In many cases the attributes borne by an imperial woman were not the sole property of any
one deity. Instead they were found in numerous different contexts where their existing connotations
would then take on new meanings. This phenomenon was not limited to imperial portraits either, as
the ever-increasing range of personages and personifications on coinage attest. It was also possible
for an imperial woman, herself taking on the role of a deity with a pre-existing identity rather than a
blank slate, to have her image moulded by means of several attributes in order to better articulate
how her existence was perceived.

Studies of the funerary representation of Romans in formam deorum demonstrate that specific
deities were chosen in order to portray the deceased with the qualities that they were believed to
possess during their lifetime. Matronly portraits were combined with sensual bodies derived from
statues of Venus in order to show the deceased as a woman who had fulfilled her social duties by
bearing children as evidenced by her attractiveness. The sexual aspect of Venus was tempered and
tamed for this purpose. Furthermore, D’Ambra has argued that the phenomenon of depicting girls
as Diana was not due to a belief that the goddess was associated with girls and young women
specifically, but because she embodied socially atypical female behaviour that remained available
to these girls who had died unmarried. As such, these depictions were popular not simply because
Diana was a goddess associated with youth and thus they were dressed in her costume to show this
association ‘in a charming masquerade’ – they were like Diana because they too operated outside
their social role and thus parents embraced this as an appropriate way to glorify their daughters.

So by looking at the deification by costume extended to non-imperial people, it becomes clear that
artistic representation functioned in a way that commemorated and communicated mortal
qualities. In some cases it could be that there was a hope that the deceased would transcend their
mortality in death, but overall the practice of merging human and divine identities seems to have
served the purpose of characterising representations of the deceased as did the appearance of
mundane attributes. Since this practice of denoting the subject’s qualities through such a medium
was extended to private citizens and imperial men, it is not unfeasible that these were also in effect
with regards to the imperial women.

Literary Perceptions of Attributes

Since the focus of this chapter is upon how imperial women interacted with, and were perceived to interact with, the attributes of goddesses, it is also necessary to consider how divine costume as an individual matter was understood in other contexts, in order to provide a better comprehension of this issue. To begin with, attributes as they appeared on the gods themselves seem usually to have served as a means of identification. In Cicero’s *de Natura Deorum*, Cotta, arguing against Velleius’s claim that the gods are human in form because that is how they appear to him, says:

Very likely we Romans do imagine god as you say, because from our childhood Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Neptune, Vulcan, and Apollo have been known to us with the aspect with which painters and sculptors have chosen to represent them, and not with that aspect only, but having that equipment, age, and dress…You [Velleius], never see [Juno Sospita] even in your dreams unless equipped with goat-skin, spear, buckler and slippers turned up at the toe. Yet that is not the aspect of the Argive Juno, or even of the Roman. It follows that Juno has one form for the Argives, another for the people of Lanuvium, and another for us.252

Thus clothing and attributes were instrumental in the recognition of gods and goddesses, due to the repeated adherence to a model by artists. Because Velleius is so used to the appearance of Juno Sospita, the aspect of the goddess worshipped in his hometown of Lanuvium, that is how she is dressed in his imagination, yet such a form would be incomprehensible to outsiders. It is not the actual appearance of a god which heralds their divine nature, but it does render them identifiable and meaningful to those who have been familiarised with such a depiction. This reliance on the ‘correct’ dress and attributes of deities is given greater emphasis by Artemidorus, a dream interpreter of the second century AD. An appearance by Zeus is only fortuitous if he is ‘in the form that we have imagined him to be or seeing a statue of him in which he is wearing his proper attire.’253 Moreover, if a hero should appear to a dreamer, he cautions that:

…one should bear in mind that each of them must be wearing his own proper attire and that he must not change it or cast it off. He must not appear in simple clothes or be without his usual weapons, since, then, whether the god signifies something good or bad, he is lying and deceiving.254

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253 Artem. 2.35.
254 Artem. 2.40.
Such anxieties about the inappropriate dress of gods and heroes is probably derived from the same concerns concerning mortals. For both cases it was ideal that external appearance should be in accordance with one’s identity.

When it came to mortal men bearing the attributes of gods, they were judged in a similar manner. By taking on the appearance of a god they were also seen as making a claim to their nature and qualities. Judgements as to the appropriateness of such claims took both god and behaviour into account. Antony was said to have dressed as Dionysus for joint portraits with Cleopatra, and was hailed as Dionysus ‘Beneficient and Giver of Joy’ in Greece, to which Plutarch adds that he ought to have been Dionysus ‘Carnivorous and Savage.’ Augustus was not safe from condemnation either. According to Suetonius he and eleven others held a banquet at which each guest dressed as one of the Olympians, Augustus himself taking the place of Apollo. When the populace got wind of this extravagance, which coincided with a period of food shortage, there were remarks that he was indeed Apollo – but Apollo Tortor ‘the Tormentor.’ The veracity of this anecdote aside, it demonstrates that commentary on the individual’s behaviour was made with reference to their divine model.

It was a repeated charge against unpopular emperors that they dressed themselves in divine guise, which was frequently established by the bearing of the correct attributes of particular gods. Caligula had an extended repertoire, detailed by Suetonius, Cassius Dio and the emperor’s contemporary Philo of Alexandria, who, in keeping with the tradition of comparing man to god, rejected Caligula’s claims to such costumes due to his inadequate personal qualities. A particularly interesting case is that of Commodus, who was not only described as having an overt interest in being identified with Hercules by bearing his lionskin and club (which took his place at the games if he could not attend), but also acted like him, though only in the inglorious behaviours of dressing as a woman and being drunk in public. Moreover, the well-known bust from the Horti Lamiani shows the emperor in this guise (Fig.32).

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255 Cass. Dio 50.4.3.
256 Plut. Ant. 23.3-4.
258 Philo Leg. 98-114; on Caligula’s use of attributes as a claim to personal qualities and virtues Smith 2000: 540-1.
259 Cass. Dio 73.17.4; Herod. 1.14; SHA Comm. 8.5, 9.6,
260 Cassius Dio reports that ‘vast numbers of statues were erected representing him in the garb of Hercules.’ (73.15.6); also SHA Comm. 9.2.
This bust shows a correlation between the reported behaviour of the emperor and his visual representation. His interest in becoming a new Hercules through his achievements, and the adoption of his appearance might become more understandable through another of Artemidorus’s interpretations:

If a man dreams that he spends time with the god [Hercules] and assists him in his work or shares his meals with him or wears the same clothes or receives from the god his lion skin, his club, or any other weapon, this dream has been observed to be inauspicious and bad for all men…for the life that Hercules led is the one he imparts to the dreamer, and the life that he led when he lived among men was full of trials and misery…Frequently the dream signifies that a man will find himself in situations similar to those that the god was in when he was carrying those weapons.261

Normally, the prospect of carrying out Hercules’s labours would be an off-putting one. For an emperor who wished to emulate the god, however, adopting his attributes, which themselves were products of his labours, was but the start of his desired destiny.262 I would also point out that the

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261 Artem. 2.37.

262 Hekster 2002: 160-2 for the importance placed on Hercules Romanus during Commodus’s reign.
bearing of Hercules’s characteristic attributes is considered even more portentous than actually partaking in his labours. Such belief is in my opinion another manifestation of the attitude towards the wearing of a notable individual’s clothing examined in Chapter One. Although here Artemidorus does not pass judgement upon the suitability of taking on illustrious mantles, the underlying assumption that clothing and other accessories were themselves indicative of certain qualities remains.

This recurring theme of the personal qualities of gods being imparted through their characteristic costumes challenges Gradel’s suggestion that this divine dress-up is an expression of the natural progression of the emperor on the spectrum towards divinity, and that the objections raised by various authors were due to their unwillingness to accept these attempts at claiming divine status. Gradel writes that dress was a form of proclaiming one’s status, which of course it was. Fejfer, writing in regards to the artistic representation of emperors with divine attributes, cites Gradel’s work in her argument that:

[w]hether these…are to be read as metaphors and assimilated to a particular deity or whether the emperor was associated with the deity, remains uncertain and perhaps irrelevant. Rather than demonstrating ‘difference of natural history’, divine accessories served the purpose of showing the power of the emperor and should be read in the context of an honorific practice that expressed his superior status.

I believe that the evidence above is sufficient to counter such claims. By dressing up as a god in general, it was possible that an emperor was making a statement about the divinity which could be recognised upon his death. However, the bearing of attributes of a specific god, even if it was only done to make the emperor’s aspirations to divinity more obvious, was clearly regarded as a claim to a similarity between the two, both in literature and in art.

There is no equivalent record of imperial women acting in this way – their transgressions of this sort were much more mundane. The closest example in the time period covered by this thesis is of

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264 Fejfer 2008: 374.
265 Divinity (or lack thereof) becoming apparent only on death: Suet. Aug. 100.4; Suet. Vesp. 23.4; Cass. Dio 46.2, 59.30.1; also Levene 2012: 54-5. A similar case is that of Menekrates, a doctor who was so successful in this profession, succeeding where others had failed, that he dressed as Zeus, added the god’s name to his own, and went about with an entourage of people who also dressed as various gods. He was eventually invited to a banquet by King Philippus of Macedon, who, in keeping with Menekrates’s claim to divinity, served him only incense and had libations poured in his honour. This proved too much for Menekrates’s still human appetite and he left in humiliation (Ath. 33-4).
Messalina playing a maenad to Silanus’s Bacchus at their illegal wedding.\textsuperscript{266} It is possible that Livia could have been present at the Banquet of the Twelve Gods, but if she was she is not mentioned and thus escaped censure. Much later, Serena, the niece of Theodosius and mother-in-law of Honorius, stole and wore a necklace adorning a statue of Rhea, for which she was upbraided and cursed by the last of the Vestal Virgins.\textsuperscript{267} However, Zosimus does not imply that Serena was trying to create an association between Rhea and herself, only that she was motivated by greed and arrogance.

**Martial and a Statue of Julia Titi**

Should this scarcity of literary accounts be regarded as evidence for Zanker’s claim that imperial women were not treated the same as men in this regard – that there was no desire to portray them as possessing qualities of goddesses, and rather that they were convenient mannequins for the goddesses themselves? I do not believe that this was the case, and in order to refute that argument effectively it will be necessary now to turn to the functions of attributes in art. To bridge the gap between literature and art in this matter, I will begin by considering a textual mention of a physical object. As mentioned in the previous chapter (p.66), Martial addresses a statue of Julia Titi and praises it for its exquisite beauty:

Julia, who would not think you molded by Phidias’s chisel or a work of Pallas’s artistry? The white lygdu matches with a speaking likeness, and living beauty shines in your face. Your hand plays, but not roughly, with the Acidalian knot, that it snatched from little Cupid’s neck. To win back Mars’ love and the supreme Thunderer’s, let Juno and Venus herself ask you for the girdle.

\textit{Quis te Phidiaco formatam, Iulia, caelo,}
\textit{uel quis Palladiae non putet artis opus?}
\textit{Candida non tacita respondet imagine lygdos}
\textit{et placido fulget uiuus in ore decor.}
\textit{Ludit Acidalio, sed non manus aspera, nodo,}
\textit{quem rapuit collo, parue Cupido, tuo.}
\textit{Ut Martis reuocetur amor summique Tonantis,}

\textsuperscript{266} Tac. \textit{Ann.} 11.31.
\textsuperscript{267} Zos. 5.38.
It seems clear that the statue Martial refers to depicted Julia with attributes of Venus. It is unclear whether there was also a Cupid figure with her or whether he was called to mind by the presence of the knot in Julia’s hand. Julia cannot be assuming the identity of Venus as that goddess is shown to exist independently, but what is happening – or what Martial perceives as happening – is that Julia is taking on the duties and powers of Venus as embodied by her bearing of the strap by which lovers are kept faithful. Another epigram from the same book elucidates how this was carried out:

As joyous Venus was uniting Ianthis for ever to Stella the poet, she said ‘I could not give you more.’ Thus before the lady; but a naughtier word in his ear: ‘See you don’t misbehave, villain. I often beat wanton Mars in a rage when he played the gadabout before we were formally married. But since he has been mine, he has never betrayed me with another woman. Juno would wish to have so well-conducted a husband.” She spoke, and struck his breast with a secret thong (arcano percussit pectora loco). He is better for the blow. But now, goddess, spare your servant (parce tuo).

Here Martial characterises blows from Venus’s whip as inspiring fidelity in errant husbands. This use differs from Horace’s mentions of Venus’s weapon of love, where it arouses love that previously there was none. As such it serves a similar function to the girdle (cestus) which Hera deceitfully borrowed from Aphrodite in order to regain Zeus’s love in the Iliad. Although the girdle mentioned by Martial belongs to Julia herself rather than to Venus, it is clearly thought to possess the same powers, as a way for Martial to favourably compare Julia’s beauty and charms to those of Venus. It is tempting to theorise that Martial’s reaction to a statue of Julia with this accessory was influenced, directly or not, by the revival of the Augustan moral legislation under Domitian. The constriction of Venus’s amatory powers within the boundaries of marriage is also reflected in the use of Venus’s body in funerary portraits of matrons. Therefore Julia is not Venus, but can use her powers as she has been invested with her whip, which, as she is the emperor’s niece and thus not likely to be presented here by Martial as the inciter of untrammelled

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268 Mart. 6.13.
269 Mart. 6.21. This epigram refers to the marriage of Martial’s patron Stella to his lover Violentilla, also mentioned in Statius. For an argument favouring the reading of caede duos over the alternative of parce tuo, as well as an explanation for the peculiarity of casting Venus as the pronuba rather than Juno, see Watson 1999.
270 Hor. Carm. 3.26.9-12.
passion amongst the populace, was employed in the restitution of the conjugal ideal of chastity. A comparison with Venus was intended through the inclusion of her whip and possibly also Cupid, and Martial uses this as the basis for his flattery. He is not suggesting that this is anything other than a portrait of Julia, only that the attributes of Venus are particularly fitting in light of her beauty.

**Whose Attribute Is It Anyway?**

In cases such as this, an identification with one particular deity through their specific attributes was intended. However, this was not always so. As indicated by the passages from Cicero and Artemidorus above, the use of attributes as signifiers of a deity’s identity was derived from and reinforced through their appearance with individual gods in both painting and sculpture. However, it was not the case that they were invariably found in this original context. It has already been noted that portraits of Hellenistic rulers frequently incorporated the attributes of several different gods, and even hymns sung in praise of the ruler could do so as well. This practice was not limited to real people or even to mortals. Mylonopoulos has shown that it was reasonably common for a god or mythical hero to be represented with the attribute of another god in order to make a visual statement about the situation the artist was depicting. For example, an image of Herakles attending a symposion shows him holding a kantharos, a drinking-cup usually carried by Herakles. The kantharos was not one of Herakles’s attributes, but it emphasises the specific situation in which he is placed.274 Another image shows Odysseus wielding Poseidon’s trident. This is not something which has a basis in the Odyssey. However, Mylonopolous argues that this should be understood as a metaphorical image of Odysseus triumphing over the antagonistic Poseidon.275 Therefore attributes functioned as a means of identification in art, but this could be interpreted in different ways. It was not always the case that an attribute signified the presence of the god with whom it was associated. It could evoke an association with them in the viewer’s mind, yet this did not erode or override the identity of the portrait’s subject, an important point for the consideration such portraits of Roman imperial women.

This collage of attributes, also present in Roman art, has posed some problems in interpretation, most notably in the case of the so-called Tellus relief on the East wall of the Ara Pacis Augustae (Fig. 33).

274 Mylonopoulos 2010: 176.

Debate has raged about the identity of the central female figure, with Tellus, Venus, Pax, and Ceres suggested. The problem arises from the amalgamation of the iconography of several goddesses and personifications, with no main identity making itself clear. This has led to Torelli’s suggestion that there is no main identity, and the figure should be viewed as a composite of several goddesses. This has met with disapproval from de Grummond, who writes that:

One may readily admit the Roman tendency to pass attributes from deity to deity…One may agree with Torelli that, especially in Augustan iconography, there may occur a ‘multisemantic charge’ in which a single figure may bear allusions to several parallel beings from myth or real life…Nevertheless, each figure retains a basic central identity.

It is this last clause which is of especial importance when considering the imperial portraits which employ such multifarious references to divinities. Odysseus holding Poseidon’s trident is not Odysseus-as-Poseidon nor Poseidon in the form of Odysseus. By the same token it should be

278 De Grummond 1990: 664.
assumed in the first instance that an imperial woman retained her mortal identity, with all that that entailed, even when her portrait referenced divine beings. This provided the foundation which made the visual referencing of deities comprehensible. A striking example of the use of diverse attributes in an imperial portrait is found on a cameo of Livia regarding a bust of Augustus (Fig. 34).

Figure 34. Cameo of Livia regarding a bust of Augustus. Kunsthistoriches Museum, Vienna.
Due to the representation of Augustus in this manner the work is generally regarded as dating from after his death. Livia is veiled and holds stalks of grain and poppies in her left hand, referencing Ceres; she also wears a turreted crown associated with Tyche and Cybele; the association with the latter goddess seems more likely due to the presence also of her tympanum decorated with a lion motif. In addition, Livia’s left shoulder is bared as found on representations of Venus Genetrix, and finally, the braided strap of a stola is visible on her right shoulder. The composite nature of this image has proved puzzling to scholars. The conveyance of multiple associations has precedent in the ithyphallic hymn to Demetrius, where the king was associated with several divine beings.279 Versnel notes the self-contradictory nature of the hymn, as it was not theologically possible for Demetrius to be all of these things at once, and so proposes that the audience accepted the mutual exclusiveness by only acknowledging one idea as each was proposed, allowing for a cohesive message to be imparted.280 That, however, was in a medium that permitted and might even have encouraged such an approach. When it came to regarding portraits that contained multiple assertions as to the subject’s identity, the immediate and simultaneous nature of the messages means that this becomes a much more difficult task. Thus the approach that has been favoured for the interpretation of this work has been to consider all of these elements to have formed part of a coherent whole. It has been suggested that Livia is depicted here as the priestess of Divus Augustus, a role she attained upon his death.281 The idea of a woman with attributes being a priestess is not without precedent. It was not uncommon for priestesses to take on the dress, even if only in a representative manner, of the goddess they served.282 However, there is little indication that this is the situation here. As Kampen has argued, the divine attributes appear to serve a different purpose. Kampen chooses to examine the attributes depicted and the goddesses they evoked in terms of the context of Livia as grieving widow – and due to the terms of Augustus’s will, daughter. Each of the three goddesses was noted for the loss of a loved one – Cybele Attis, Ceres Persephone, and Venus Adonis – and this seems to have superseded their other connotations. Thus rather than this being an eclectic collection of disparate assimilations or a portrait of Livia as imperial priestess the use of divine attributes in this cameo provides references to goddesses which give meaning to Livia’s role as a widowed empress.283 Such a composite image is also reminiscent of the confusion over severe faces and idealised nude bodies in both male and female portraits. The current opinion is that these

280 Versnel 2011: 454.
should be regarded as complementary aspects of a whole image. Therefore the same should apply to these attributes.

**Julio-Claudian Women**

The Schaffhausen cameo mentioned in the previous chapter (Fig. 14, p. 55) merges the attributes of a cornucopia, caduceus, and the bared shoulder typical of the Venus Genetrix type upon a figure thought to be of an imperial woman, probably Livilla.\(^{284}\) The pairing of a cornucopia and caduceus is also found on coin reverses identifying the bearer as Felicitas, and, perhaps more importantly, a sestertius minted in 22-23 AD showing a caduceus flanked by two cornucopae, the latter each surmounted by the head of a young boy (Fig. 35).\(^{285}\) On the reverse is found the legend DRVSVS CAESAR TI[BERI] AVG[VSTI] F[ILIVS] DIVI AVG[VSTI] N[EPOS] PONT[IFEX] TR[IBUNICIA] POT[ESTAS] II.\(^{286}\)

![Figure 35. RIC 42, sestertius of Drusus Minor.](image)

It is clear that the children on the obverse represent the sons of Drusus Minor and Livilla, and that their depiction here in the company of cornucopae and a caduceus is probably borne of the same sentiment that directed the creation of the Schaffhausen cameo. It seems to me unlikely that the composition of the attributes were a deliberate attempt to evoke the personification of Felicitas, as no coins were issued with a figure identified as such until Galba.\(^{287}\) An alternate suggestion is that

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\(^{285}\) Children shown in or on top of cornucopae: Kozakiewicz 1998: 88, 94-5.

\(^{286}\) RIC 42; Rose 1997: 27-8.

\(^{287}\) RIC 411. L. Licinius Lucullus installed a temple of Felicitas in the mid-2\(^{nd}\) c. BC (Strab. 8.6.23), but I do not believe it likely that the cult image for this temple provided the model for the figure in this cameo.
the portrait was modelled on Pax. Such an assimilation might seem an odd choice, but when the connotations of Pax are considered, especially in a period not far removed from the reign of Augustus, it is both potent and pertinent. Returning to the cameo, Livilla is not here shown with her sons as she is on cameos in Berlin and Paris. Instead her fertility and her role as progenitor is conveyed by her appearance alone. It is too simple to ascribe her representation here to one deity alone and is in any case inaccurate. The bared shoulder is found on several glyptic portraits as well as here and is usually taken as an attribute of Venus Genetrix, ancestress of the Julian gens. The result is a composite costume that references Livilla’s status as a member of the Julio-Claudian family as its most important element. This composition in my mind bears similarities to the depiction of the female figure on the east wall of the Ara Pacis Augustae and thus I will here return to the debate concerning her identity and the significance of the various elements of the image. Whatever the identity of the figure, it is clear that she was created with Augustus’s ideal vision of the renewed Rome in mind, which relied heavily on the promulgation of children, for which his own family provided an exemplum on both north and south friezes. The figure promised prosperity which was granted by the peace which Augustus had restored and guaranteed by the promulgation of the Julian gens, which was referenced by the presence of its existing members and by the panels on the west wall showing Aeneas and his son Ascanius/Iulus. It is likely that the main figure on the Tellus relief was also conceptualised as a particularly Augustan goddess. The innovation lies not in the creation of new attributes but the employment of those already in use. If, as proposed by de Grummond and Spaeth respectively, the figure was Pax or Ceres, the slipping drapery introduces an element of Venus Genetrix into her identity, thus stressing the role of the Julian gens in particular in bringing her benefits into fruition; however, if she is Venus as Galinsky believes, she is a particularly maternal and nurturing manifestation of the goddess, as befitting Augustus’s intentions. Thus in either case the result is an image of a goddess interpreted within an Augustan milieu. Returning to the Schaffhausen cameo, the situation is reversed. This already is a woman within a Julio-Claudian context as emphasised by her relation to Venus Genetrix and the laurel wreath. Her role within the family is expressed by the symbols of prosperous peace, a

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291 For more on the Augustan reinvention of Venus see Hales 2005: 137.
293 For the laurel wreath as a Julio-Claudian symbol, symbolising the fertility of the imperial house, see Flory 1995: 46-7. 62.
felicitous one even if it had not yet been given that name. The result is a message of good fortune for the empire as a whole but it derived from the achievements of an individual.

Attributes commonly found on imperial portraits are the cornucopia and sheaf of grain, with or without poppies. These are usually seen as references to Ceres (or her Greek counterpart Demeter), or sometimes also Fortuna. However, it is limiting to regard the appearance of these on imperial portraits as invocations of the goddess(es) alone. The popularity of these attributes shown through their use in numerous different contexts results in a greater range of meanings. Even outside the imperial context these could appear in conjunction with several deities or personifications. The constant was the connotations of wealth, abundance, and happiness, meanings pertinent to the imperial women and not limited to their association with Ceres. Pliny the Elder mentions a statue of Bonus Eventus holding a patera in his right hand and a poppy and ear of grain in his left. This representation is corroborated by his depiction on coins of Galba, Titus, and Antoninus Pius. Bonus Eventus is also named by Varro as a vital figure in the production of crops. Thus although he has a similar representation to Ceres in that he holds grain and poppies, he is still a separate being. Ceres holds grain because she is the goddess of agriculture; Bonus Eventus holds grain because the success he represents is vital for the harvest. Another attribute associated with Ceres, the corona spicea, appears on images of Triptolemus, Ptolemaic kings, and Roman emperors. In this context it does not serve to identify these figures as Ceres, but does evoke an association with her that transgresses the boundaries of gender. Might this association, rather than identification, also be the case for imperial women? Their sex probably engendered different readings of the attributes – motherhood, rather than agricultural success – but the purpose of articulating achievements, qualities, or aspirations on an individual level remains the same. The representation of imperial women with such attributes as the corona spicea and ears of grain almost universally appears to have coincided with the bearing of children. Therefore it celebrated the achievements of the woman thus depicted rather than simply associating Ceres with the imperial house.

Claudian-era coins from Alexandria show Messalina on the reverse holding two small figures representing Claudia Octavia and Britannicus in one hand, and two ears of grain in the other. It is tempting to draw an equivalency between the children and the ears of grain, thereby strengthening

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294 Mylonopoulos 2010: 191 ‘[a]lmost none of the most commonly employed attributes can be connected exclusively with a deity or heroic figure.’
296 RIC I Galba 4; RIC II Titus 89; RIC III Antoninus Pius 658.
297 Varro *Rust.* 1.1.6.
299 RPC 5145, 5164.
the visual statement of fertility. On these coins Messalina is accompanied by the legend MESSALINA KAIS[AR] SEBAS[TE], making her importance clear but not explicitly associating her with a deity (Fig. 36).

Figure 36. RPC 5113. Tetradrachm of Claudius from Alexandria, Messalina on the reverse holding two children and two ears of grain.

This would seem to support Gradel’s hypothesis that divine costume represented personal power rather than outright assimilation. However, this sheaf is the only divine accessory to be found on these coins. The positioning of the figures themselves does of course have a divinising air, but in terms of costume there is no crown, wreath, or sceptre to be found. All these elements taken together paint a picture of imperial women who were revered, a reverence that was expressed through associations with existing divinities but for one particular reason. As mentioned before the paramount role for women in Roman society was that of mother and progenitor of the family line. Therefore it should be expected that when it was time for the most important women in the empire to be honoured it was in the milieu of divine mother, so even if she was nominally acclaimed as queen of the gods her maternity and fecundity were stressed through the addition of the attributes of Ceres/Demeter. Divine attributes were expressions of power, but not power per se. It was also possible for onomastic and visual assimilations to reference two different deities. A tetradrachm from Tarsos bears the legend SEBASTES IOULIAS HERAS, but the seated figure carries a sheaf of grain rather than a sceptre (Fig. 37).

300 The presence of the title Sebaste, Greek equivalent to Augusta, is of note here. Some have hypothesised that the laurel wreath visible on some portraits of Julio-Claudian women is an indication of their elevation to this rank, but I favour Flory’s explanation, which is also relevant to this particular case. What is of especial importance here is that the title of Augusta could be explicitly linked to the birth of children (cf. Messalina, Poppaea). Therefore this image is, like the cameos examined in the previous chapter, a composite of disparate maternal elements which could be juxtaposed with each other to great effect.
Kozakiewicz has suggested that this is due to Ceres-inspired imagery being so closely associated with Livia that even when she was nominally associated with another goddess it was still Ceres/Demeter who provided the visual model.\footnote{Kozakiewicz 1998: 107-8.} In my opinion this theory does not account for the possibility of this being a conscious choice, something that was quite probable in light of the scholarship concerning the repurposing of attributes outside of their original contexts. Since Livia was still the main figure, neither Hera nor Demeter should take precedence. Therefore there is no reason why either one should be regarded as a deviation from the other. Instead both should be seen as deriving from Livia herself, espousing different aspects of her role. Another reason why Kozakiewicz’s theory is not tenable is that this phenomenon does not only occur in relation to Livia. Coinage from Bithynia hails Messalina as Hera, but the figure shown holds wheat and poppies.\footnote{Mikocki 1995: 102, 186-7.} Thus we should consider that the Livia coin was not a mistake or an appeal to her more familiar imagery. Instead it seems likely that both goddesses were chosen to provide a frame of reference for the empress. It was not necessary for name and image to match. I would stress that in such cases I do not believe that either empress is represented as Hera with the fertility connotations of Ceres. As mentioned before, it was not unknown for deities to appear with each other’s attributes, or at least those which they did not usually hold, in order to provide additional context for a particular portrayal, but the presence of Livia and Messalina means that this paradigm needs to
be altered. It must be the empress herself who holds the central identification, with Hera and Demeter each providing context for the regard in which she is held.

Another common attribute for the imperial women was the cornucopia. It was popular in general, borne by several female divine figures as well as the *Genius Populi Romani*, and also appearing in conjunction with some emperors on glyptic works of art. Thus it is impossible to identify any one deity as its owner, and by extension for any imperial woman shown holding it to be assimilated to said deity. An examination of the appearance of attributes on Roman coinage from the late Republic onwards demonstrates how attributes were instrumental in communicating visual messages. Throughout the imperial period the cornucopia was found in combination with many deities and personifications, such as Fortuna, Felicitas, Liberalitas, Concordia, Pax, and Hilaritas.\(^303\) Thus it could in no sense function as an identifying feature. Instead the meaning of beneficial abundance that had been attached to it allowed its inclusion with many figures as an intensifier. These abstract virtues were granted practical resonance through the promise of prosperity.

One striking example is found on the Sebastaeion at Aphrodisias, where Agrippina the Younger is shown crowning her son Nero (Fig. 38).\(^304\) This could be regarded as a pendant piece, in spirit if not in place, to the sculpture of Agrippina and Claudius, also in Aphrodisias, showing them participating in the *dextrarum iunctio* (Fig. 39).

\(^{303}\) Examples: Fortuna RIC II 682; Felicitas RIC I 412; Liberalitas RIC II 216; Concordia RIC I 48; Pax RIC III 404; Hilaritas RIC II 270.

Figure 38. Relief from the Sebastaeion at Aphrodisias. Agrippina, holding a cornucopia, places a wreath on Nero’s head.

Figure 39. Relief from the Sebastaeion at Aphrodisias. Agrippina and Claudius perform the *detrarum iunctio*, Agrippina holding a sheaf of grain.
In the latter work Agrippina is shown holding ears of wheat in her raised left hand, while her husband is shown heroically nude; in the relief with Nero she bears a cornucopia and stephane while her son wears military dress. Thus in both reliefs Agrippina fulfils the role of munificent wife and mother respectively while the emperor is shown as a warrior. However, only Agrippina is given additional attributes that grant her a divinising air.\(^{305}\) Rose has noted the similarity in composition between the Nero and Agrippina relief and coins from showing Augustus being crowned by Roma. Ginsburg has also pointed out an implicit association of Agrippina to Venus in the Claudius relief.\(^{306}\) In these images where the overall message trumps particular elements, this matter of identification is not of paramount importance. What was of particular import was that Nero was the new emperor, thanks to his mother (a statement that may have met with some controversy but undeniably had some truth to it) – therefore the cornucopia, divorced from other, more identifying features, can symbolise the benefits of all these divinities. The cornucopia could symbolise Agrippina’s fecundity which was responsible for Nero’s existence and also joy and hope for Nero’s reign. Agrippina’s importance lends credence to these interpretations. Therefore the most fruitful interpretation of these representations of Agrippina is not to confine them to equations to one particular deity, but to understand how the attributes themselves shape her image. The popularity of the cornucopia in images of divine figures and imperial women alike is rendered explicable by understanding it as the ultimate visual metaphor. The end result of all this genuflection was to represent the hope for well-being of the populace bestowed by the emperor. The inclusion of a cornucopia emphasised the importance of this exchange. It was not depicted for its own sake, or to ‘complete’ a divine image. This can also be seen in images of the cornucopia (or sometimes two) on the reverse of coins devoid of any figure to hold it. One example can be seen on the coin of Sulla mentioned in the previous chapter, where the reverse features two cornucopiæ.\(^{307}\) Coins issued under Julius Caesar and Octavian show the cornucopia among an assortment of symbols, evidently functioning as a promise of peace and security on the part of those men, but not explicitly associated with either Pax or Securitas.\(^{308}\) The denarius issued on Caligula’s accession famously showing and naming all three of his sisters depicts them in overtly divine aspect, each holding a different attribute in addition to a cornucopia (Fig. 40).\(^{309}\) There has been an attempt to assign a divine identity to each – Concordia, Securitas, and Fortuna, - but what is of particular note is that

\(^{305}\) This situation is similar to that noted by Ginsburg 2006: 97-104 pertaining to the assimilation of imperial women to goddesses on coins from Eastern mints, which was not extended to those of the emperor.


\(^{307}\) RRC Cornelia 33.

\(^{308}\) RSC 29; RIC 126, 127.

\(^{309}\) RIC 33.
each holds a cornucopia.\textsuperscript{310} This is in my opinion the best indicator that the cornucopia was not treated as an attribute of any particular goddess.

\textbf{Figure 40. RIC 33. Sestertius of Caligula. Drusilla, Julia, and Agrippina on the reverse, each holding a different attribute as well as a cornucopia.}

Even when a woman had been officially made a \textit{diva} and included amongst the pantheon in her own right, it was still common for her to be depicted with elements of other goddesses. There does not appear to have been an official costume for divinised women, instead it depended upon the intentions of the creator or commissioner. For example, the coins issued by Domitian showing \textit{Diva Domitilla} show her wearing a \textit{stola} and no divinising attributes at all.\textsuperscript{311} This seems to have been part of a concentrated attempt to portray familial solidarity amongst the dynasty, as Domitian’s wife Domitia is shown in the same manner.\textsuperscript{312} Moreover, the facial resemblance between Domitian and his deified mother or sister is exaggerated to the same effect. Therefore at least upon coinage the representation of a deified woman appears to have been subject to the overall presentation of her family rather than to personal glorification. This is also in effect upon a relief in Ravenna showing a Julio-Claudian family group generally thought to derive from the reign of Claudius (Fig. 41).\textsuperscript{313}

\textsuperscript{310} Wood 1995: 461.

\textsuperscript{311} RIC 150, 156, 157.

\textsuperscript{312} RIC 151, 153, 156.

Figure 41. Relief showing Julio-Claudian family group. Livia, second from right, with Cupid upon shoulder. Museo Nazionale, Ravenna.

It shows various Julio-Claudians in divine guise despite not all of them being officially recognised as *divi* or *divae*. There remain traces of golden stars attached to the heads of Augustus and the figures generally recognised as Drusus the Elder and Germanicus. This symbol is usually taken to signify official deification as it appeared on coins issued by Augustus that commemorated Julius Caesar.\(^{314}\) However, there is no surviving evidence that Drusus or Germanicus actually received divine honours. So barring the possibility that they did indeed receive deification and that our literary and numismatic sources for the period omitted to mention this, we must accept that the appearance of divine elements upon imperial portraits cannot be regarded as indicators of official divine status. This means that it is very likely that such costuming was a result of general feeling rather than being governed by imperial decrees over who was to receive divine honours. The intention of this piece was to portray Claudius’s revered ancestors in a manner that glorified both

\(^{314}\)Zanker 1988: 34-36.
them and the emperor. Thus it is an idealised family portrait rather than an impartial documentation of divinisation. All of the probable individuals in the scene were deceased, yet there is nothing to set the divinised apart. In the group on this relief a woman, probably Livia, is shown in the guise of Venus with a Cupid upon her shoulder. If this was indeed a Claudian work then it shows a deified Livia, yet there is nothing here to show that this is *Diva Augusta* – even those members of the family who were not deified were represented as such. In addition, more than one woman within the family could share the assimilation but not the attributes. The family group at Baiae, also Claudian in date, not only features Antonia Minor as Venus complete with Cupid, but also her granddaughter Claudia Octavia as a miniature Venus Genetrix.\(^{315}\) This rare doubling of an assimilation within the same context should perhaps be regarded as a visual remark on the role of Octavia as future matriarch of the imperial family and thus the necessity of following the example set by her grandmother. Young girls were not usually assimilated to Venus, with Diana being a popular choice.\(^ {316}\) Venus was usually chosen for older women and especially those that were married.\(^ {317}\) However, it must be remembered that these consecrations of private individuals were found in funerary contexts and it seems to have been the case that the chosen deities were thought to encapsulate the qualities of the deceased. As Octavia was still alive at the time of the portrait’s production, her assimilation to Venus should instead be viewed as an aspirational one which was became more significant by the presence of the exemplary Antonia.

It is interesting to note that when Livia was represented as *Diva Augusta* on the coinage of Galba she was not given the same attributes as she was in her Julio-Claudian portraits (Fig. 42).\(^ {318}\)

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\(^{315}\) Rose 1997: 82-3; Wood 1999: 165-170, 283.

\(^{316}\) D’Ambra 2008: 171-2. However other deities could be chosen; see Matheson 1996: 189-90.

\(^{317}\) Kleiner 1981.

\(^{318}\) RIC 4, 13, 14.
It appears that here she was fulfilling the new purpose of erstwhile patron rather than maternal progenitor. Thus the accessories associating her with Venus and Ceres and other goddesses of fertility and plenty do not make an appearance on Galba’s coins. In this latter instance her image has been reinvented in order to better suit his purpose. It is possible that this was not a new depiction of Diva Augusta, as we do not know what her cult statues looked like. However, Rose suggests that the seated figure with grain on Claudius’s Diva Augusta issue is based on the cult statue (Fig. 43). The answer to the question of why Diva Augusta was represented so differently in these two examples is probably that while her descendants still reigned it was thought expedient to adapt the representation of maternal goddesses in family contexts, a concern which was not applicable to Galba’s invocation of her patronage.

Figure 43. RIC 101. Dupondius of Claudius. Divus Augustus on obverse, Diva Augusta holding grain on reverse.

**Faustina the Elder**

New elements of divine assimilation appear during the Antonine and Severan periods, contributing intriguing questions as to how the connection between empress and divinities was negotiated. A work that introduces a new element into the assimilation corpus is the relief depicting the joint apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina the Elder (Fig. 44).

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319 Suet. Galb. 5.2; Plut. Galb. 3.2 for Livia’s support of Galba as a young man.

320 RIC I 101; Rose 1997: 40.
It is not the first depiction of an empress’s apotheosis – the earliest surviving example is of Sabina, some years earlier, but she is not depicted holding anything to mark any particular assimilation. The circumstances of Faustina’s portrayal, however, seem to have been influential in this regard. Vogel points out that, compared to the relief of Sabina, the Antonine apotheosis was not so much a narrative work as an ‘ideological message concerning consecration, the Golden Age, and the pietas of the descendants.’\textsuperscript{321} This work was produced on her husband’s death, twenty-one years after hers. Antoninus is shown holding a sceptre topped by an eagle, evoking an association with Jupiter, while Faustina also holds an unadorned sceptre. Although lacking the unique attribute of the peacock, there is reason to believe that Faustina is here meant to be the Juno equivalent to Antoninus’s Jupiter.\textsuperscript{322} This development in relation to the depiction of Sabina might be due to the circumstances of presenting this as a joint apotheosis. Thus Faustina’s depiction as Juno is dependent upon how Antoninus is portrayed. One would assume that upon divinisation it was no longer necessary to adopt attributes. However, evoking the king and queen of the gods could still have been considered an expedient method of creating the symbolism of the piece. In this case Antoninus and Faustina would not have been represented as Jupiter and Juno, but rather as an equivalent couple. A column capital from Lorium also shows Antoninus and Faustina ascending

\textsuperscript{321} Vogel 1973: 54.

upon an eagle and peacock respectively. Mikocki notes that the majority of onomastic assimilations of imperial women to Hera/Juno are found in company with those of their husbands to Zeus/Jupiter. He believes that this is because the assimilation to Hera/Juno is one that otherwise does not provide much information about the honorand, and so the presence of a Zeus/Jupiter-figure is usually required in order to render it meaningful. Although I would not go so far as to say that an image of Faustina accompanied by the accoutrements of Juno would have proved meaningless in the eyes of onlookers, I do think that the decision to present her and her husband as a pair on the Column and on the Lorium capital was a definitive factor for her depiction as a figure akin to Juno. As we have seen the representation of a *diva* was not set in stone. It changed depending upon the way in which the deceased woman herself was considered important to those who commemorated her.

**Julia Domna**

Finally, three works appear to show Julia Domna bearing the palm of Victory – a relief now in Warsaw, a cameo in Kassel, and the Arch of Septimius Severus in Leptis Magna. This attribute is not found in portraits of preceding imperial women. Kampen has suggested, rightly in my opinion, that this was due to the perceived need to gather all aspects of political life under the auspices of the imperial family. I will focus here on the Warsaw relief showing Julia Domna bearing a palm leaf and extending a wreath to her son Caracalla (Fig. 45).

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326 Kampen 2009: 95. For more on Domna as mother of the empire, see Langford 2013, particularly 31-8.
Figure 45. Relief showing Julia Domna, holding a palm leaf, placing a wreath on Caracalla’s head.
National Museum of Warsaw.

The visual and narrative similarities between this work and the relief of Nero and Agrippina mentioned above are obvious and provide a base from which to discuss the difference in how a maternal imperial figure was portrayed. A gem from Lincoln shows Caracalla, dressed as Hercules, being crowned by a generic Victory-figure in the same narrative but not composition as the Warsaw relief.\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^7\) The existence of this gem shows that it was not the case that Julia Domna had simply replaced the figure on Victory upon the relief. Instead the differences between these two works show that the decision to create an image of the empress as a conferrer of victory was a considered one. To begin with, it is not probable that the Warsaw relief is Domna as Victory. The slipping

\(^3\)\(^2\)\(^7\) Henig and Marsden 2002: 419-20.
drapery leads me to think that the model for Domna’s depiction here is Venus, an identification also proposed by Kampen.\textsuperscript{328} However, Kampen believes that this is more specifically a depiction as Venus Victrix, something about which I have some reservations. I would argue that Domna’s depiction here certainly has some elements of Venus Victrix but these have been adapted for the context of assimilation to Julia Domna. Venus Victrix was a popular reverse type for Caracalla’s wife Plautilla, and also appeared on the coinage of Domna and Caracalla.\textsuperscript{329} Although the palm does appear on a number of these types, it is by no means the only attribute, as the apple given to her by Paris, sword and shield, Cupid, sceptre, \textit{Victoriolae}, and captives all make appearances. In the majority of cases Venus is nude to the waist, or at least has one breast bared, in contrast to Julia’s comparatively demure bare shoulder. Thus already there is a deviation from the Venus Victrix type in use during the period in question, one perhaps more in keeping with her role as the emperor’s mother. Furthermore, the main attribute invoking an association with Victory is the palm, which also appears on both of the other examples of this particular assimilation. The empress is not winged, as she is on the Kassel cameo. The differences visible on these two works might perhaps be explained by the situation of each piece. It is possible that on the Kassel cameo Julia Domna is portrayed in a more symbolic manner – that the features of the empress have been transposed onto a traditional figure of Victory with the result of making a statement about her family’s role as guarantors of Rome’s victory. The Warsaw relief, however, is making a clear statement about the relationship between the emperor and his mother and thus emphasises her maternal qualities while downplaying the more militaristic aspects of the goddess. Captured barbarians and a military trophy appear, but they interact and are interacted with, respectively, by Caracalla, and are also spatially separated from Domna by him. Thus it seems that it was not the intention of the commissioner of this piece simply to associate Julia Domna with the goddess Victoria. Instead an attribute of the goddess was combined with the iconography of Venus in order to create a take on Venus Victrix that was appropriate for the image of an empress bestowing the responsibility of empire upon her son in an echo of the Sebastaion portrait of Agrippina and Nero. This relief is an example of the greater purview of the imperial mother expressed through her new attribute, but the ultimate meanings of both pieces are the same.

\textsuperscript{328} Kampen 2009: 94-5.

\textsuperscript{329} RIC 310, 311, 312, 536, 579, 581, 632.
In conclusion, although the employment of divine attributes and goddess assimilation is not an issue that has been ignored with respect to the imperial women, this study has provided additional insight into why it was used in specific scenarios and the underlying concepts that determined their use. The main thing I wish to enunciate here is that contra Zanker, it was not the case that imperial women were given divine attributes in order to associate certain goddesses with the imperial house. The investigation of a number of instances of attributes appearing on imperial portraits – whether those that belonged only to one specific goddess or those that were borne by several deities – indicates that although such depictions drew upon the knowledge of existing deities and their connotations, they did not supplant the identities of the imperial women. Instead attributes provided further information and referenced divine models for their achievements and roles. So while a woman might be portrayed as holding the attributes of Ceres, for example, Ceres did not take precedence despite her divine status. As Martial’s description of the statue of Julia Titi holding Venus’s whip shows, the woman retained her individual identity, and although their similarity that was evoked by the bearing of the same attribute drew comment, this resulted in a comparison between the two rather than their identities being merged into one. Other examples show that aspects of a woman’s life also determined her portrayal even in the presence of divine attributes. Messalina might be shown holding ears of grain in one hand, but she also held two children in the other. The depiction of her son and daughter made her apparent assimilation to Demeter intelligible. Intra-familial relations also dictated representations of Livia and Faustina the Elder, who were shown with various attributes in order to better articulate the relationship between them and their husbands. This altering of attributes depending upon the role played by a particular woman can also be seen in the depiction of divae. There does not appear to have been one set way in which a divinised woman was represented. For example, Livia as Diva Augusta was depicted as a Ceres-like figure during the reign of Claudius, when her maternal qualities were pertinent, but on Galba’s coinage this was abandoned in favour of a figure which did not possess dynastic connotations.

These depictions were reactions to the existence of the individual imperial women themselves. The attributes they were given had to make sense within that specific context. The identities of the women involved rendered such portrayals comprehensible, as the attributes did not simply evoke an association with a goddess. When applied to mortals, attributes appear to have functioned as visual metaphors. They were especially effective due to their appearance alongside divine figures which both provided clues as to their meaning and added an exalted aura to the figure that bore them. It is clear, from both textual and visual evidence, that the transfer of attributes from one figure to another could be understood as denoting similarities between the two. As such, attributes served an
important role in constructing visual representations of imperial women. In turn, the individual existences of these women gave meaning to attributes within the image.
Conclusion

This thesis has examined the significance of sartorial accessories in the construction of images of imperial women. It has investigated whether all instances of adornment in this context were negative, under what circumstances adornment and attributes appeared, and how they were used as a means of representing the imperial women. Previous studies on this topic, and especially those on adornment, have not provided satisfactory answers to these questions. Part of this problem arises from the lack of sustained examinations of the source material. More significant, however, is that there has also been a tendency to regard literary or visual portrayals as factual where jewellery and clothing are concerned. This approach has hindered our understanding of the reasoning behind such representations. Rather than seeking to ascertain what imperial women really wore, this thesis analyses accessories in art and text as elements of constructed portraits. The evidence studied within this thesis demonstrates that accessories, whether jewellery, fine clothing, or divine attributes, were treated as significant elements in the representation of imperial women. Although most adornment did not mark out a woman as holding a specific role in Roman society, it could still be used in an equivalent manner to evoke particular connotations in the reader or viewer’s mind. These connotations went beyond material wealth, which does not usually come into play in this context. Instead, in keeping with the high status and extreme influence of these women, their jewellery is used as commentary on the status of the imperial family and thus the empire itself.

Chapter One shows that when adornment was included in literary portrayals of imperial women, it was not intended to be an objective description of her actual attire. Instead it served as a means of passing comment on the behaviour of imperial women, and, more importantly, on the conduct of the emperors to whom they were related. For example, when Tacitus writes that Nero and Agrippina fought over the jewels and gowns that had once belonged to previous imperial women, their conflict did not arise from the possession of these items, nor does Tacitus portray it thus; instead it is inserted into a larger narrative concerning the struggle for power between Nero and Agrippina. This pattern repeats itself throughout passages concerning imperial women’s adornment. Adornment is included in these accounts not as a matter of prosaic interest but as a motif through which several topoi could be employed.

Although in some cases jewellery was mentioned as a manifestation of the avarice or flightiness of a particular woman, as in Pliny’s castigation of Lolliia Paulina or Macrobius recounting Julia’s clashes with Augustus, this was only a fraction of the ways in which adornment was treated. The emperor Vitellius’s mother Sextilia was not chastised for wearing pearl earrings – instead her son
drew the ire of Suetonius for acting in a manner which was not in accordance with expectations of how women’s personal wealth should be treated. The emperor could be directly involved in these incidents, like Vitellius, and Nero and Agrippina’s altercation over the imperial wardrobe. Otherwise, although he was not directly mentioned, his presence still influenced the significance of a scene. When L. Vitellius begged to be given Messalina’s shoe and then publically treated it as a token of affection, this not only demonstrated Messalina’s promiscuity and that L. Vitellius’s opportunistic subservience had no bounds, but also provided yet another illustration that Claudius was thought to be an ineffectual emperor who was subject to the whims of his wives.

Adornment, so often perceived as a peculiarly feminine pursuit, repeatedly appeared in instances where women sought to exercise their limited power. Agrippina the Younger, who was said to have inserted herself into military matters where she had no place, appeared at a *naumachia* wearing a military cloak made of gold cloth, showing that she was overly invested in a sphere in which she was not welcome, but also illustrating that this was due to her sex, betrayed by her flashy display. The emperor Elagabalus’s mother Julia Soaemias, another woman who was criticised for her overinvolvement in politics, allegedly appointed herself head of the *senaculus*, where she could dictate to the noblewomen of Rome what they were allowed to wear. Although such anecdotes draw upon the belittling of women’s adornment as a futile endeavour, they also show that it was also treated by authors as equivalent to the exercise of actual *imperium*. Julia Soaemias’s regulatory activities in the *senaculus* were similar to those of her nephew Alexander Severus when he assumed the imperial power, but while she was treated as a petty dictator fixated on absurd minutiae, Alexander Severus was praised for decreeing what the imperial women should wear, and for the imperial family providing an example for men and women alike.

Barred from exercising power through legitimate channels, literary portrayals of imperial women such as Agrippina and Octavia looked to their own dress and that of their predecessors in order to articulate their position within the court. Thus it does appear that even though not all depictions of adorned imperial women were negative, the dismissal of women’s business as something separate and lesser from the actions of men – in other words, how adornment was often perceived in literature – underscores many of these passages, highlighting the fact that the vast majority are really commentary on the conduct of the emperors and their ability to rule. However, this does not diminish the significance of the use of adornment for the purpose of crafting scenes and dialogues that were comprehensible to readers. By understanding these passages as rhetorical devices rather than information about what particular imperial women wore, it becomes clear that they cannot provide a realistic picture against which visual culture can be contrasted.
Chapter Two examined how jewellery in imperial portraiture was also an element of idealised representation, rather than a depiction of lifelike attire. The common assumption that adorned portraits of imperial women were usually private in nature as they could otherwise be regarded as portraying these women in a negative light is not supported by the evidence. It was shown that jewellery could have positive connotations in art, and certainly did in imperial portraits. The meaning of the adornment shown on women was altered depending upon their personal circumstances. Since the imperial women were partially responsible for the continuation of their dynasty and were presented as mothers to the entire empire, these appear to have related to fertility, maternity, and abundance, rather than personal wealth or sophistication. It also appears that a significant portion of the jewellery in these portraits was included as a way of either visually assimilating imperial women to goddesses, or that they were adorned in order to actualise the benefits they were thought to have bestowed upon the world as statues of goddesses were. It does not appear to have been a coincidence that portraits of both imperial and non-imperial women included jewellery alongside visual references to goddesses. Since several depictions of Venus showed her wearing armlets, it is probable that the armlets appearing on posthumous portraits of women who are likened to Venus were also references to images of the goddess. Rather than being depictions of the type of jewellery a wealthy woman would have worn, these are symbols of the goddess’s beauty and sexual desirability, qualities which the deceased woman was also thought to possess.

Although it is not possible to say that all instances of jewellery on imperial portraits were based on divine models, it is clear that since there is a high degree of overlap between jewellery and divine attributes, that these two elements were far from incompatible and were probably intended to complement each other. As the attributes that were depicted in tandem with jewellery were those which denoted fertility and abundance, it is probable that in this context, necklaces and earrings also contributed to this visual message. This contrasts with the portrayal of adorned women in Roman moralist writings as either inadequate or unwilling mothers. One particular style of necklace that is recurrent in these portraits has a single amulet, which has repeatedly been identified as a *bulla*. This identification is incorrect, and it is much more likely that the women are wearing a fertility charm or one with apotropaic properties to safeguard their existing children. The presence of children in two of these images is significant, as it makes clear that the fecundity and maternity ascribed to these women was not solely due to an abstract ideal of the benevolent empress but was also intended to have a physical manifestation in the form of heirs to the dynasty.
Adornment is most commonly found on glyptic images – which does not mean that they were viewed only by a select few – but a number of marble portraits also show evidence that jewellery was attached to them in antiquity. As imperial women had such an exalted position in society, it is a possibility that their images were decorated with necklaces and earrings for reasons that were similar to those which motivated the adornment of statues of divinities. Both Augustus and Galba were said to have dedicated items of jewellery to goddesses, apparently in thanksgiving for military success, and archaeological evidence reveals that statues of Venus and Fortuna, the deities that received (or were meant to receive) these gifts, once had earrings attached. In addition to the accounts of Augustus and Galba’s dedications, Ovid writes that statues of Venus were also bedecked in jewellery. Since it is clear that this ornamentation of divine images could not have been based on rendering their wearing of actual jewellery, it must be the case that it served a symbolic purpose. Possible interpretations of this include the benevolence or munificence of the goddess, or perhaps the jewellery provided a tangible indication of these qualities. In any case, it seems quite probable that adorned portraits of imperial women took their cues from divine images in an attempt to exalt the subject as a superhuman figure who bestowed blessings upon the empire through observance of her maternal duties.

The divine attributes that appeared in the glyptic images examined in Chapter Two call to mind either particular qualities that were embodied by goddesses. These qualities could be imparted to other deities or to mortals by the sharing of attributes which provided a visual reference to their original bearers. This practice did not erase or overwrite the identity of the secondary bearer at all. Instead their identity was instrumental for giving the image meaning, and figure and attributes had a reciprocal relationship. This pattern is borne out by the analysis of artworks which show the imperial women accessorised with divine attributes in Chapter Three. Rather than imposing the identity of a goddess over that of the woman by garbing her in this costume, it is clear that imperial women, like their male counterparts, were portrayed as possessing the same qualities as a deity while retaining their individuality. It is clear from Martial’s reaction to a statue of Julia Titi where she was portrayed with at least one attribute of Venus that he did not regard her to be the goddess. Instead Julia is like Venus due to her outstanding beauty – which even surpasses that of Venus – and Martial realises this comparison by referring to the amatory powers of Julia’s girdle, which like its owner, is superior to the original model. The connection between Julia and Venus is not made apparent solely through Julia’s physical appearance, but also through the sharing of items which are related to the goddess’s purview of love and beauty.
The decisions that were made concerning the inclusion of attributes and the references they engendered appear to have been determined by the circumstances of each woman that was portrayed. As such, the use of attributes in these images was not, precisely, an established costume in which the imperial women were dressed, but rather an assemblage of symbols which were carefully employed to best convey the desired message. This could be done in a variety of ways. Since the practice of visual assimilation was formed from a basis where aspects of one being were transferred to another in order to create a link between them, a process where the latter was not subsumed into the former but retained their identity, it was quite possible for attributes from several sources to appear in connection to the one figure. This is evident on cameos depicting Livia and Livilla, where alongside various other attributes they are also shown with the slipping drapery which generally denoted Venus Genetrix, the ancestor of the Julian gens. Attributes were not simply attached to imperial women in order to create an association with a particular goddess, but could also be depicted for the purpose of displaying a connection which was thought to already exist. Therefore, the argument that imperial women were shown with attributes in order to associate a particular goddess with the imperial family and its implication that the women involved were interchangeable and their personal qualities were not taken into account is untenable.

Elevation to the rank of diva did not come with a specific costume to denote this change in status. Instead artists continued to employ existing attributes in order to articulate the relationship a woman had with those by whom she was honoured. Livia, as the emperor’s grandmother and matriarch of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, appeared on Claudius’s coinage as a Ceres-like figure holding a sheaf of grain, emphasising the role of her fertility and maternity; yet when she appeared on the coinage of Galba this attribute disappeared. Livia as a mother figure had resonance for the Julio-Claudian emperors, due to their actual family relationship, but Galba’s ties to her were of a different nature, and these differing circumstances are expressed in the disparate representations of Diva Augusta. In a similar vein, joint apotheosis scenes of Faustina the Elder and Antoninus Pius emphasise their marital relationship, as they are depicted with attributes of Juno and Jupiter respectively. These women were themselves being made into goddesses yet they were still given the attributes of other deities. This is a clear indicator that attributes were added to these portraits of imperial women in order to better articulate the qualities that they themselves were perceived as possessing. As such, divine attributes take on a role of accessory, one similar to jewellery. Neither was an essential element in portraiture, but they were used because they helped to articulate the perceived roles and qualities of the imperial women.
Due to self-imposed restrictions, adornment in visual media apart from sculpture was not addressed in this thesis. This meant that Julia Domna’s appearance on the Severan tondo was not analysed or explained. As it is the only extant painting of an adorned imperial woman, the only comparanda available are portraits of women of lower rank. Since a number of these survive, it might be more productive to consider the tondo as part of that corpus, rather than seeking to explain its significance in this thesis. Additionally, since this thesis has been focussed upon the women of Rome’s imperial families and the application of accessories within that milieu, those appearing on women in other ranks of society could not be discussed in any depth. A study comparing imperial women’s adornments and attributes to those of non-imperial women could yield interesting results and further establish the extent to which they were important to imperial representation.

Accessories, by definition, are not essential to an outfit; they are extraneous additions, often without practical use. However, they are not without purpose – they add colour, interest, and complement what is already in place. This is how they are used in imperial portraits, whether literary or visual. Writers could have conveyed their points about minor and major power struggles within the imperial court without referring to how a particular woman was dressed; a woman could be shown alongside her child(ren) to illustrate her maternity without wearing a fertility amulet to belabour the point; Faustina and Antoninus’s ascensions to godhood did not need to be framed in terms of the ultimate divine couple in order to make sense. Yet by accessorising their creations, authors and artists produced images that were both striking and more substantial.
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