

**THE EMPRESS IN LATE ANTIQUITY  
AND THE  
ROMAN ORIGINS OF THE IMPERIAL FEMININE**

by

Carina Marie Nilsson  
Bachelor of Arts, Simon Fraser University 2007  
Bachelor of Fine Arts, Simon Fraser University, 2007

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

In the  
Department of History

© Carina Marie Nilsson 2011  
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
Spring 2011

All rights reserved. However, in accordance with the *Copyright Act of Canada*, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for *Fair Dealing*. Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.

# APPROVAL

**Name:** Carina Marie Nilsson  
**Degree:** Master of Arts  
**Title of Thesis:** The Empress in Late Antiquity and the Roman Origins of the Imperial Feminine

**Examining Committee:**

**Chair:** Dr. Mary-Ellen Kelm  
Associate Professor, Department of History

**Dr. Dimitri Krallis**  
Senior Supervisor  
Assistant Professor, Department of History

**Dr. Willeen Keough**  
Supervisor  
Associate Professor, Department of History

**Dr. Mary Lynn Stewart**  
External Examiner  
Professor, Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies

**Date Defended/Approved:** January 7, 2011



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

## Declaration of Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the "Institutional Repository" link of the SFU Library website <[www.lib.sfu.ca](http://www.lib.sfu.ca)> at: <<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>>) and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library  
Burnaby, BC, Canada

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis looks at the position of the empress in Late Antique Byzantium, and seeks to trace the processes by which imperial women came to wield power, and actively participate in governance. In this context, Julio-Claudian and early imperial constructions of the imperial feminine help highlight the continuities and changes that shaped the political role of empresses. By using gender as an analytical tool this thesis explores the dynamic nature of the relationship between empress and emperor, and assists in the diachronic analysis of the various ways in which imperial power was articulated in literary and visual representations.

**Keywords:** Byzantium; Empress; Emperor; Gender; Feminine; Masculine; Imperial; Numismatics; Statuary; Monument; Art; Literature; Rhetoric.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my family for all of their support, love, and endless patience. To my mother and father, Rosina and Jan Nilsson, who instilled in me the fascination and curiosity for a good story, and who trekked across the ocean countless times to care for my little ones, giving me the opportunity to research and complete this thesis. To Cyrus Thiedeke, for your confidence and encouragement during many a late night and frantic moment. To my two little ones, Finn Barbro Thiedeke and Augustus Cyrus Thiedeke, the best motivators of all.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My utmost gratitude to Professor Dimitri Krallis for his direction and guidance throughout the completion of this thesis. My sincerest thanks for introducing me to Byzantine history years ago, and continuing the discussion when, as a graduate student, I was the lone Byzantinist amongst a sea of modern historians.

I am indebted to Professor Willeen Keough's conviction, kindness, and sharp insight, which has opened up my understanding of history, and made this thesis the stronger for it.

I also must acknowledge my close friend and colleague, Julia Maureen Smith, and her constant encouragement and cheer. Sometimes it was all I needed to press on.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Approval.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Figures .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Tables: Roman Imperial Dynasty Family Trees.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.1 Survey of Literature .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter One: From Roman Republic to Dynastic Monarchy, the Rise of the Imperial family .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Chapter two: Continuity and Innovation in Byzantine Imperial Representations .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>85</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Detail of Southern Frieze, *Ara Pacis Augustae*, 13 BC.

Figure 2: Marlborough cameo; turquoise cameo depicting Livia and Drusus, 9 BC.

Figure 3: Arsinoe II and Ptolemy II, Alexandria mint, 265 – 260 BC.

Figure 4: Adoption and sacrifice reliefs, Ephesus Parthenon Monument, ca. AD 170.

Figure 5: Trier Ivory, dated late 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 6: Gold coin, Pulcheria obverse, Victory reverse; struck AD 420-422 Constantinople mint.

Figure 7: Ivory Panel, Empress Sophia; early 5<sup>th</sup> century.

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 – Julio-Claudian Dynasty Family Tree

Table 2 – Nerva-Antonine Dynasty Family Tree

Table 3 – Severan Dynasty Family Tree

Table 4 – Tetrarchy and Constantinian Dynasty Family Tree

Table 5 – Theodosian Dynasty Family Tree

Table 6 – Justinian Dynasty Family Tree

\* All Family Trees © **1998 R. Scott Moore**

## Figures



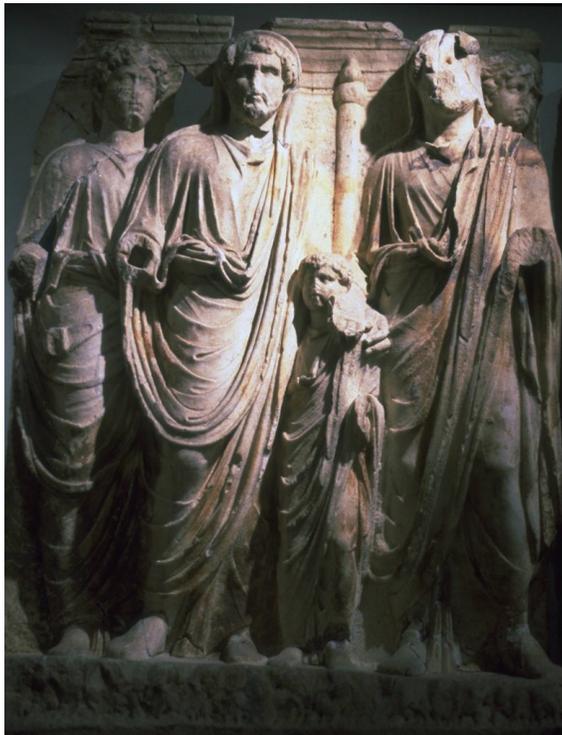
Figure 1 Detail of Southern Frieze *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Altar of Augustan Peace); © 2006 Mary Ann Sullivan



Figure 2 Marlborough Cameo: Livia with the Bust of Divius Augustus (perhaps Drusus), Turquoise Cameo. 9 BC. ARTstor [online]. New York: New York. [cited 22 August 2010]. Available from World Wide Web: (<http://www.artstor.org>)



**Figure 3 Copper-gold coin. Arsinoe II and Ptolemy II jugate busts, ca. 265-260 BC. © 2005 Matthias Kabel from Wikimedia Commons.**



**Figure 4 Parthian Monument from Ephesus: Adoption of Lucius Verus as a youth by Emperor Hadrian, accompanied by Marcus Aurelius and Antoninun Pius; side relief of altar enclosure, completed ca. AD 170. ARTstor [online]. New York: New York. [cited 2 September 2010]. Available from World Wide Web: (<http://www.artstor.org>)**



Figure 7 Reliquary Panel: Translation of Relics of 40 Martyrs [Trier Ivory]. Late 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> Century. ARTstor [online]. New York: New York. [cited 14 June 2010]. Available from World Wide Web: (<http://www.artstor.org>)



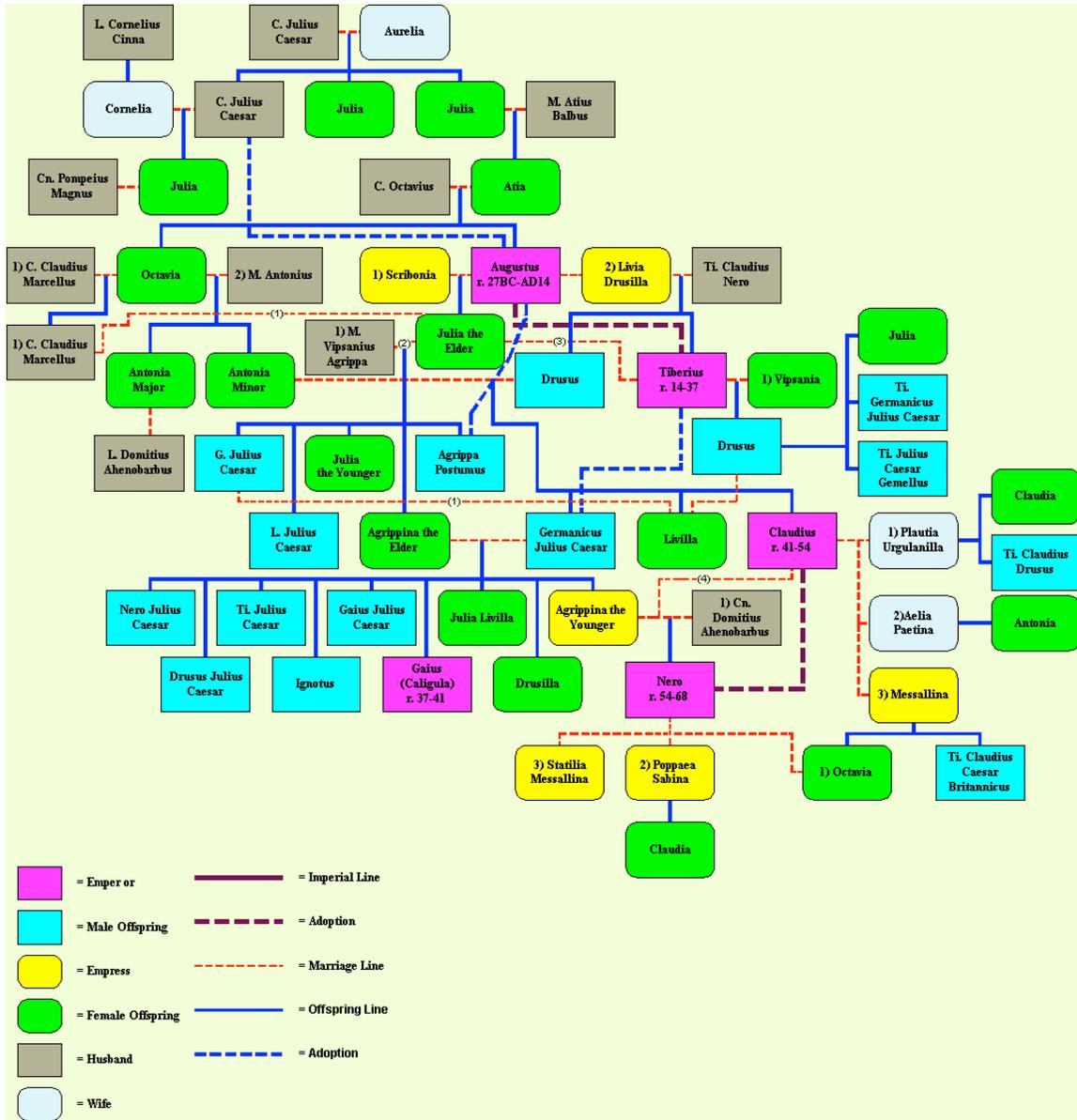
Figure 6 Gold Coin: Empress Pulcheria obverse, Victory reverse. Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (<http://cngcoins.com>)



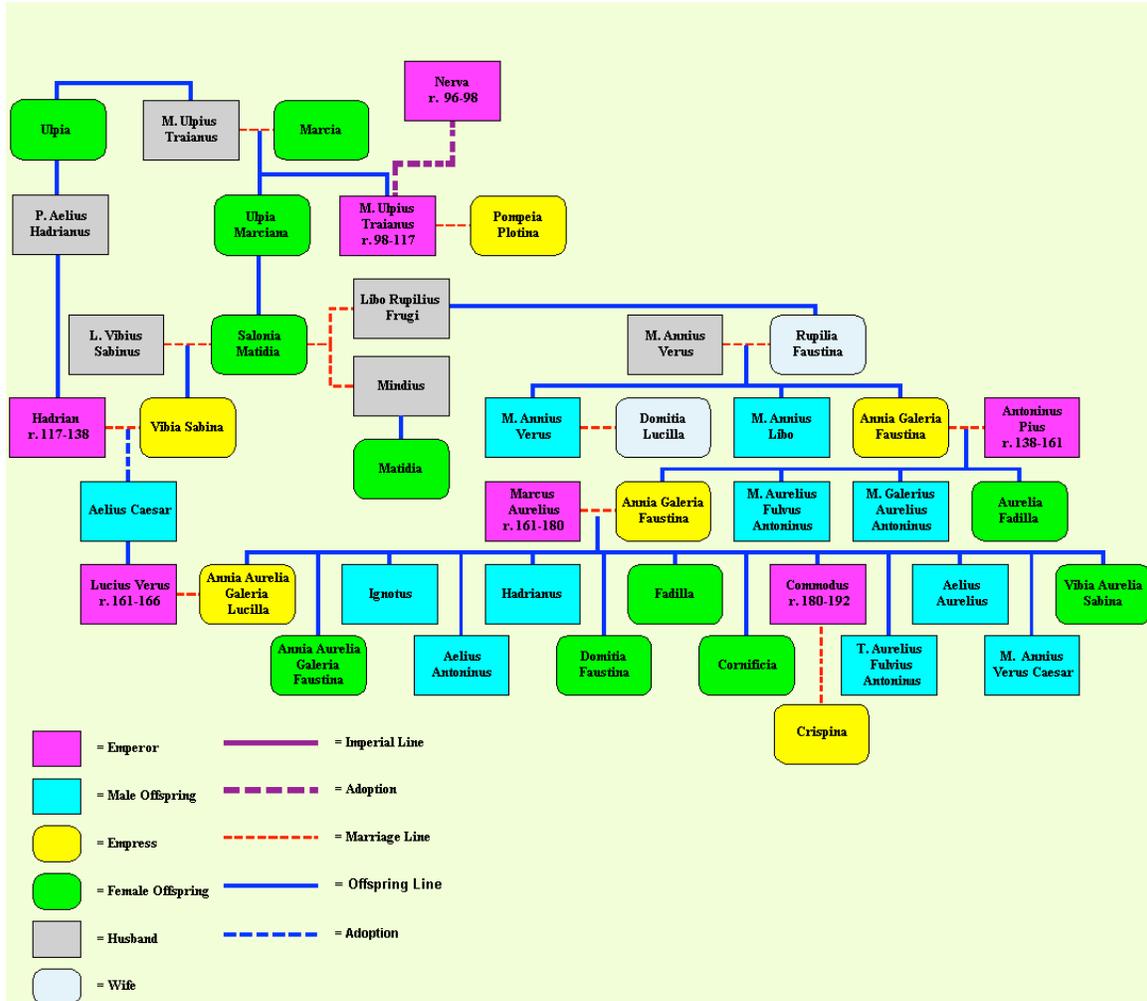
**Figure 7 Ivory Panel: Empress Sophia or Empress Ariadne, Bargello Museum, Florence Italy. Photograph from Ludwig von Sybel, *Christliche Antike*, vol. 2, Marburg, 1909.**

# Tables: Roman Imperial Dynasty Family Trees

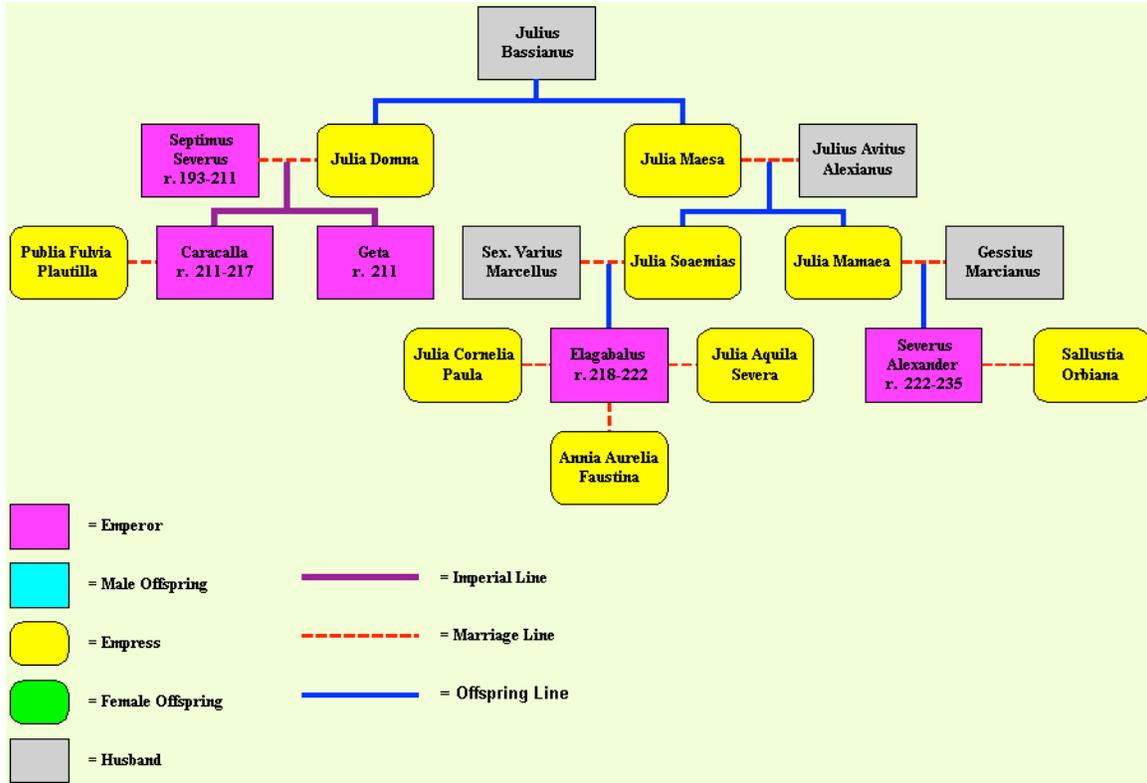
Julio Claudian Dynasty (44/31/27 BC – AD 68)



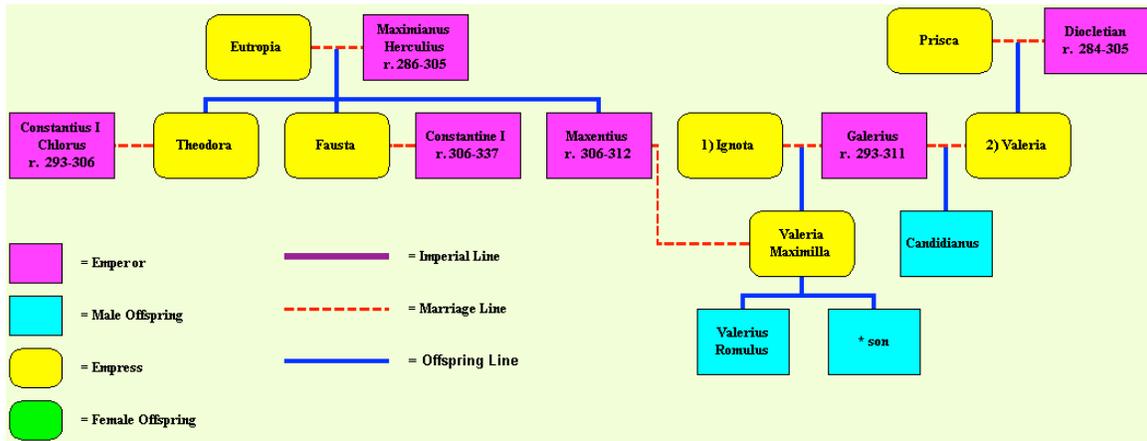
# Nerva-Antonine Dynasty (AD 96 – 192)



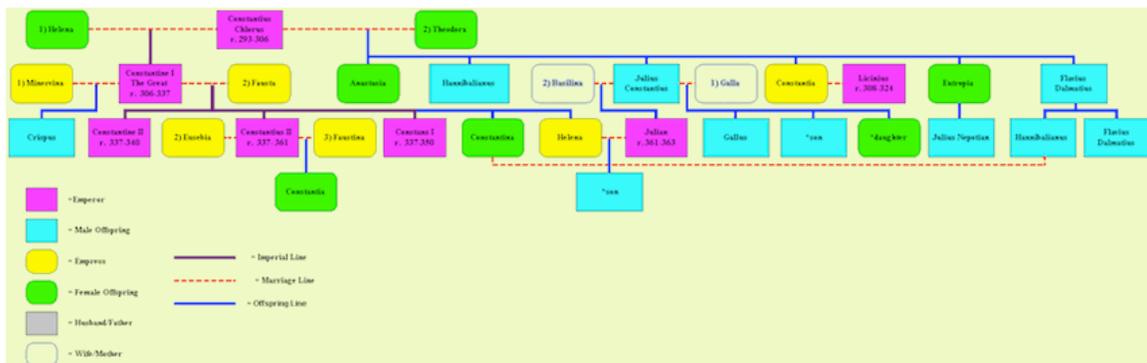
# Severan Dynasty (AD 193 – 235)



## Tetrarchy (AD 293 – c. 313)

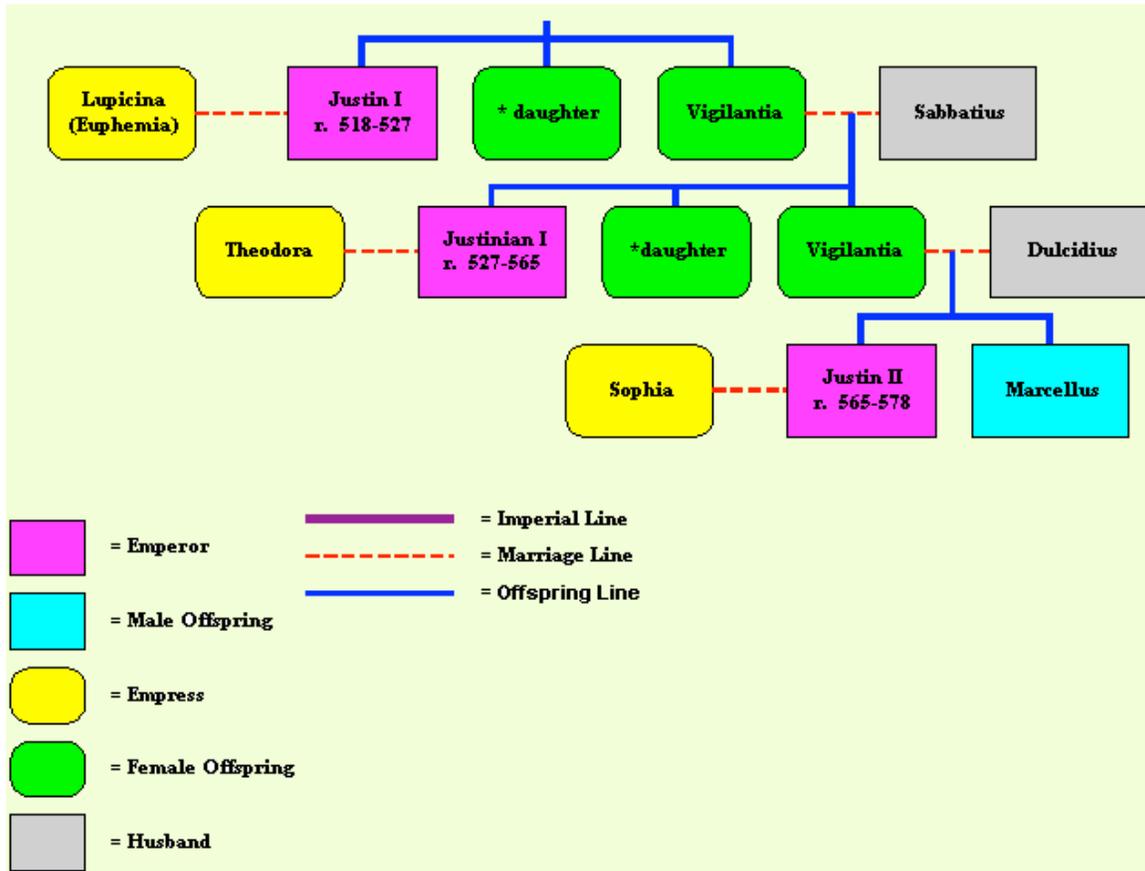


## Constantinian Dynasty (AD c.305 – 363)





## Justinian Dynasty (AD 518 – 602)



## INTRODUCTION

The empress' position changed dramatically from the first days of imperial Rome in the first century BC, until the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 AD. In the field of Byzantine history, the active participation of the empress in the governance of the empire has been quieted as all focus has been on the role of the emperor. This is despite compelling evidence in Roman, and early Byzantine and later literary and visual representations of the imperial feminine and masculine that suggest our understanding of the relationship between the empress and the emperor must be revised.

This thesis seeks to explore the construction and conceptualization of the Byzantine imperial feminine, up until the sixth century AD. Since one cannot gain a sense of the Byzantine imperial feminine without first examining its origins, our starting point will be in the first century BC, the beginning of the so-called principate, with the first empress and emperor Livia and Augustus, and their efforts to institutionalize the family in a way that would legitimize imperial rule and establish the imperial family as synonymous with the state. The Byzantines did not call themselves "Byzantine," nor did they name their empire the "Byzantine

Empire.” They were Roman, and so called themselves.<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, the terms “Byzantium” and “Byzantine Empire” will be used to mark out the period after the move of the Roman Empire’s capital from Rome to Constantinople in 330 AD.

The historiographical understanding of Byzantinists, both traditional and contemporary, has defined women, be they lowborn or aristocratic, in relation to men. This is particularly true with regards to Byzantium’s imperial rulers. The emperor has overwhelmingly been represented in the field’s narrative as the absolute in legitimate, and ultimately masculine power, while the empress has existed as the politically powerless half of the imperial couple. Without a place in which to acknowledge legitimate feminine power, an empress’ involvement in politics has been either explained away in terms of “exceptional circumstances”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 114: Anthony Kaldellis is one of the strongest proponents of Roman identity in the Byzantine time period, and asserts that historians “have failed to recognize the depth of Byzantium’s Roman identity.” He points out that, “After the sixth century, ‘the Roman language’ or ‘the language of the Romans’ could signify Greek as well as Latin. In other words, what we call ‘Greek’ the Byzantines could call ‘Roman,’ simply because they were Romans and that was their language.”

<sup>2</sup> The phrase “exceptional circumstances” (also utilized: “favourable circumstances”) has been used continuously throughout the decades to signify moments in Byzantine history when an empress has allegedly stepped outside her prescribed role as a largely powerless empress and come to wield authoritative imperial power. This could be a situation where an empress is acting as regent for an underage son, or is sitting on the throne as a childless widow. Essentially, this phrase marks the author’s understanding that legitimate power was held by a man, and only where there was a weak male could an empress exercise power, and always for a limited amount of time until another male stepped in. A prominent example of the usage of this phrase can be found in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium under the heading of ‘empress’: “Legally, the empress depended on the emperor, but in favourable circumstances late Roman empresses such as Pulcheria, Ariadne, Theodora (wife of Justinian I), or Sophia (wife of Justin II) might wield great power, especially through a regency.” *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium e-reference edition*, s.v. “Empress”, by Michael McCormick, accessed October 14, 2008, <http://www.oxfordbyzantium.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/search?q=empress&x=0&y=0&ssid=1099595181>.

or, more commonly, cut out from the larger historical narrative. The changing socio-political context of the empire also affected the representation of the emperor, and it will be critical to reflect on how masculinity within the position of emperor was negotiated, in the effort to broaden our conceptions of imperial power.

Gender as a “question of historical analysis”<sup>3</sup> will inform the following pages, and will be integral in the effort to reach an understanding of the varied relationships of imperial power represented in the literary, material, and numismatic sources of the period. Gender as a concept will allow for an exploration of the relational dynamic between the position of empress and emperor,<sup>4</sup> and assist in examining the varied ways that femininity and masculinity as a social construction has operated throughout the centuries in relation to

---

More examples of the usage of “exceptional circumstances”: Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 4, 89; Ann L. McClanan, *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 132, 155; Judith Herrin, “In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach,” in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, edited by Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt (London: Routledge, 1993), 184; Gillian Clark, “Do Try This At Home: The Domestic Philosopher in Late Antiquity,” in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, edited by Hagit & Bas ter Haar Romeny (Belgium: Peeters 2007), 156; Lynda Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, 527 - 1204 AD* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Jeanne Boydston, “Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis,” *Gender & History* 20, no.3 (November 2008): 578. Jeanne Boydston makes the important argument that, “using gender as a question of historical analysis rather than a category of analysis encourages historians to examine their sources more critically and creatively, and focus on the complex processes and dynamic meanings that constitute a social or cultural history, rather than assume that gender behaves in the same way in every time and context.” Boydston was positioning her work against Joan W. Scott’s post-structuralist conception of power, which actually encourages the male/female binary, where only one may hold the power, while the other remains in a powerless position, rather than allowing for a wider conception of power relationships (563-564).

<sup>4</sup> Jeanne Boydston, 558. Boydston notes: “The cultural processes that have produced ‘women’ have also produced ‘men’. Gender is the concept in our current practice that encompasses this relational dynamic.”

imperial power.<sup>5</sup> Femininity and masculinity are not universal concepts and an expanded understanding of these positions as multifaceted will help avoid the binary that so often informs the pages of Byzantinists' work on empresses. Furthermore, some comments on the concept of 'power' will be necessary in order to proceed with an exploration of feminine and masculine imperial power.

While I treat Max Weber's definition of 'power' as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his (or her) own will despite resistance"<sup>6</sup> as complementary to Joan Scott's Foucauldian understanding of 'power' as the "differential control over or access to material and symbolic resources,"<sup>7</sup> for the purpose of this thesis I also look at Jeanne Boydston's important revision according to which there can also exist "deployments of power" that are not "disadvantaging others."<sup>8</sup> This last point avoids the feminine/masculine binary in which the power of the empress and emperor are mutually restrictive of one or the other's agency. This more expanded reading of the concept allows for differential degrees of power that may be exercised in various areas by a collegial political relationship. It is in this way that we can not only avoid the trope "exceptional circumstances" since there

---

<sup>5</sup> Oyeronke Oyewumi, "Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects," in *African Gender Studies: A Reader*, edited by Oyeronke Oyewumi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 11. Oyewumi writes: "If gender is a social construction, then we must examine the various cultural/architectural sites where it was constructed, and we must acknowledge that variously located actors...were part of the construction. We must further acknowledge that if gender is a social construction, then there was a specific time (in different cultural/architectural sites) when it was 'constructed' and therefore a time when it was not. Thus, gender, being a social construction, is also a historical and cultural phenomenon."

<sup>6</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1909, 1978), 53.

<sup>7</sup> Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, No.5 (December 1986): 1,069, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1864376>.

<sup>8</sup> Jeanne Boydston, 563-564.

need not have been a weakened male in order for an empress to exert power; but, we can also expand our understanding of what constitutes acts of political power. Rather than being confined to leadership in war and legislative initiatives; imperial power can be understood in terms of patronage, its role in the protection and shoring up of the faith through the construction and consecration of churches and temples, its representation in coinage and public works of art, and the ability to use religion and its symbols, be they pagan or Christian, in various ways to ensure the loyalties and devotion of a great number of the empire's people. Imperial power must, therefore, be understood dynamically in that throughout the early Roman Empire it was exercised in various and ever-evolving forms, as both members of the imperial couple used that power in a wide spectrum of ways, according to the need of the moment.

The structure of this thesis will be chronological in order to emphasize the changing conceptions of feminine and masculine over roughly six centuries. The survey of literature with which I open contextualizes the historical analysis in the following chapters and familiarizes the reader on the current state of the field in regards to Byzantine imperial women's history. Chapter One focuses on the early Roman Empire, with primary attention being paid to the Julio-Claudian dynasty (27 BC - 68 AD), and the institutionalization of the imperial family as part of the Roman state. This chapter will also examine the attempts by the Nerva-Antonine (96 - 192 AD), and the Severan (193 - 235 AD) dynasties at reviving the legacy of the Roman Empire's first imperial family, as well as the Crisis of the Third

Century<sup>9</sup> and the rise of Emperor Diocletian's Tetrarchy, which came before the move of the empire's capital from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine I.

This first chapter will mark out the context in which the first Roman emperor and empress came to rule the new Roman Empire, and how their rule was successfully passed on to their dynasty's descendants. Sources used will include Julian Law (ancient Roman Law addressing issues such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance), which saw a number of revisions by Augustus pertaining to women's rights, the family, and childbirth. A variety of writings from Roman authors – all men<sup>10</sup> - will be examined including works by the Roman poet Ovid (43 BC - 17 AD), the Greek historian Plutarch (46 - 120 AD), the consul and historian Cassius Dio (155 - 229 AD), the historian Suetonius (c.69 - 130 AD), and the senator and historian Tacitus (56 - 177 AD). In addition to these written sources, statuary, monuments, imperial coinage, and personal objects such as jewelry will provide a sense of the varied physical representations and perceptions of the empress and emperor in the early period of the Roman Empire.

Chapter Two explores the period from the fourth to sixth centuries when the Roman Empire saw a series of changes as its capital moved from Rome to Constantinople, and the empire entered a period of gradual, sometimes forced,

---

<sup>9</sup> Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 48. The Crisis of the Third Century nearly resulted in the collapse of the Roman Empire under a number of devastating forces: plague, military anarchy, civil war, economic decline, and a split of the empire into three competing states.

<sup>10</sup> It must be acknowledged that, indeed, all the written sources, and visual ones, of this period were written and created by men; therefore, one must be all the more diligent in recognizing where allegiances lay, where law informs a poet's work, or what imperial sponsorship may be influencing the words written and the images being constructed, both conceptually and visually.

transition from paganism to Christianity. Attention will be given to the changes and continuities in the visual and literary portrayal of the imperial couple during this time. Sources considered will be the writings of Bishop Gregory of Nyssa (c.335 - after 394), those of the Archbishop John Chrysostom (c.349 - 407), excerpts from Justinian's sixth century legal compilation, works from the historians Prokopios (500 - 565), John of Ephesus (507 - 586), and the monk and chronicler, Theophanes the Confessor (758 - 818). Finally, I consider next to the written sources visual evidence including statuary, coinage, and ivories.

This is the beginning of an effort to trace the processes by which the imperial feminine and masculine were constructed, while also looking at the changes in Byzantine conceptualizations of masculine and feminine articulations of imperial power over the centuries. It is certainly undeniable that society in the early Roman and Byzantine periods was pervasively patriarchal, but it is important to note that patriarchy was not unrelenting, nor unchanging. The Julian Law defined both men and women as Roman citizens; while women could not vote or hold public office, they owned and managed their own property and dowries, attended public functions, and ran their own businesses.<sup>11</sup> While it

---

<sup>11</sup> Angeliki E. Laiou published several works on Byzantine women and the economy, in particular, her essay, "Women in the Marketplace of Constantinople, 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries" is a wonderful glimpse into the world of the "artisan, the street hawker, the shopkeeper, the investor, the moneylender – all of the female persuasion." Angeliki E. Laiou, "Women in the Marketplace of Constantinople, 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries," in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, edited by Nevra Necipoğlu, (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 261.

For further reading on women as defined by, and innovations in, Roman Law (Julian Law), both Jane F. Gardner's *Women in Roman Law and Society*, 1986, and Judith Evans Grubbs' *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce, and Widowhood*, 2002, are fine forays into such research. "Although of citizen status and able to produce citizen children, women did not have a vote and could not hold public office." Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986), 262.

would be easy to state that women were a marginalized group, and considered to be inferior to men in this period, it is important to acknowledge the variety of ways in which women, imperial or not, asserted their autonomy throughout their lives. Be they wealthy patronesses or marketplace shop owners, women were active participants in historical events. In her work, "Gender History and Historical Practice," Joy Parr wrote, "it is no mark of good scholarship to claim that the histories we write are definitive, or to write in ways that disguise the limitations of the portraits we render."<sup>12</sup> This comment speaks to both past scholarships on Byzantine empresses and to the ambition underpinning this current thesis. My aim is not to construct a definition for the Byzantine imperial, but instead, to work towards an expanded understanding of what the position of empress might mean in various time periods and historical contexts. Elsa Barkley Brown wrote "the historical process is about recognizing that there are a variety of experiences and ways of understanding the world, without imposing consciously or unconsciously a notion of the norm."<sup>13</sup> It is with this observation in mind that a varied interpretation of what constituted political power in the Roman and early Byzantine period is of utmost importance within this thesis.

---

<sup>12</sup> Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," *Canadian Historical Review* 76, no.3 (September 1995): 354, <http://proxy.lib.sfu.ca/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/pqdweb?did=6832508&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=3667&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.

<sup>13</sup> Elsa Barkley Brown, "African-American Women's Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women's History," *Signs* 14, no.4 (Summer, 1989): 921, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/3174693>.

## 1.1 Survey of Literature

The transformations of academic history that came with the feminist movement of the 1960s did not affect the field of Byzantine history until the late 1990s. When feminist theory found its way into the field, efforts were made by some Byzantinists to retrieve the lives of Byzantine empresses from obscurity. The field has had a long tradition of writing women out of the historical narrative; however, my aim is not to dredge up the work of past historians who have encouraged this habit.<sup>14</sup> I am concerned with the current state of the field and how contemporary Byzantinists have constructed empresses thus far, and what can be done to the current methodology to move forward into an expanded and more nuanced exploration of an empress' position of power.

In 1985, Angeliki E. Laiou wrote that “the role of ideology must be clarified; in particular, it seems essential to study the perception women had of themselves as females, and the degree to which this perception may have diverged from male ideology.”<sup>15</sup> While Laiou was primarily concerned with women outside of the imperial realm, her concerns can be easily applied to the study of empresses, in which historians must remain continuously aware of Byzantines' understandings of their own world, and not impose a modern categorization of them. When studying empresses, feminine qualities such as, for example, fecundity must be reexamined to discover the kinds of socio-political motivations that caused

---

<sup>14</sup> A brief elucidation of a few of these historians will be addressed below.

<sup>15</sup> Angeliki Laiou, “Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women,” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985): 60.

certain attributes to be valued (in varying degrees over the centuries). Laiou and other Byzantinists, such as Alice-Mary Talbot and Averil Cameron, have been publishing works concerning non-imperial women since the late 1980s,<sup>16</sup> in which the focus has primarily been on women in relation to religion and the formation of early Christianity. In particular, Averil Cameron's work on the prominence of women in the spread of Christianity and Angeliki Laiou's monographs on women working in the marketplace of Constantinople have advanced research on non-imperial women by showing different classes of women operating with varying degrees of autonomy as market stall owners, wealthy patronesses, ascetics, entrepreneurs, doctors, and prostitutes, and have explored relationships outside

---

<sup>16</sup> Angeliki E. Laiou was (and remains) the foremost expert on non-imperial women in Byzantium: Laiou, Angeliki E. "Women in Byzantine Society." In *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, edited by Linda E. Mitchell, 81-94. New York: Garland Publishing, 1999; Laiou, Angeliki E. "Women in the Marketplace of Constantinople, 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries." In *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, edited by Nevra Necipoğlu, 111-122. Leiden: Brill, 2001; Laiou, Angeliki, "Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women; The Festival of 'Agathe': Comments on the Life of Constantinopolitan Women," *Byzantion* 1 (1986), 280-298; Talbot, Alice-Mary. *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998; Talbot, Alice-Mary. *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996; Cameron, Averil. *Images of Women in Antiquity*. London: Croom Helm, 1983; Cameron, Averil. "Sacred and Profane Love: Thoughts on Byzantine Gender." In *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, edited by Liz James, 1-23. London: Routledge, 1997; Cameron, Averil. "Early Christianity and the Discourse of Female Desire." In *Women in Ancient Societies. An Illusion of the Night*, edited by L.J. Archer, S. Fischler and M. Wyke, 152-68. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994; Cameron, Averil. "Virginity as Metaphor: Women and the Rhetoric of Early Christianity." In *History as Text, The Writing of Ancient History*, edited by Averil Cameron, 181-205. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1990; Cameron, Averil. "Neither Male nor Female." *Greece and Rome* 27 (September 2009): 60-68.

of the male/female binary of dominance and subordination.<sup>17</sup>

The work that most recently examined Byzantine imperial women is that of Liz James, Barbara Hill, Judith Herrin, Lynda Garland, and Diliانا Angelova. All recognize the importance of feminist theory; however, the majority of them fail to deploy its true analytic potential by essentially using ‘gender’ as a substitute for ‘women’. As a consequence, they end up treating empresses as individuals exercising power under exceptional circumstances, rather than examining public expectations of masculine and feminine imperial behavior and overall agency through various time periods. This tendency places their work in the retrieval vein that has characterized much of early women’s history, concentrating on an ahistorical retelling of empresses’ lives as personal biographies, rather than examining the masculine and feminine expectations of the time period, and how those informed the roles and perceptions of the emperor and empress.<sup>18</sup> Gender analysis, however, is not primarily focused on the lives and history of women; it is

---

<sup>17</sup> Steven Runciman, *Byzantine Civilisation* (University of Michigan: Meridian Books, 1956), 238. Byzantine hospitals were required to have at least one female doctor working therein, as male doctors would attend to the male patients, while female doctors and female assistants would attend to female patients. John Philip Thomas, Angela Constantinides Hero, Giles Constable, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents, Vol. 1 Dumbarton Oaks Studies XXXV*, (Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2000), xix: Thomas notes that female doctors were paid less than male doctors. Holt T. Parker, “Women Doctors in Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire,” in *Women Healers and Physicians, Climbing a long hill*, edited by Lillian R. Furst (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 136: Furst notes that female doctors and women of “lesser degrees” were registered within the medical guild.

Angeliki E. Laiou, “Women in the Marketplace of Constantinople, 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, edited by Nevra Necipoğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 272: “So they (women) were there, throughout the period under examination, active in the marketplace, ideological constraints notwithstanding.”

<sup>18</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 149-150. Gerda Lerner writes of the restrictions of retrieval history: “The limitation of such work is that it deals with women in a male-defined society, and tries to fit them into categories and value systems that only consider man the measure of significance.”

a methodology that examines the interrelationship of the feminine and the masculine, particularly in terms of power.<sup>19</sup> By substituting “women” for “gender,” the account that is being given by these Byzantinists reasserts the notion that empresses’ lives somehow operated separately from those of men. This failure to engage with the theoretical and historical implications of gender analysis is compounded by the scholars’ male-centred definition of imperial power. These Byzantinists purport to reveal the significant place an empress could hold in the world of Byzantine politics, if she were somehow favoured by circumstance. Yet, by not examining masculine and feminine constructions of power, they posit masculine power as legitimate and continue to use the traditional framework of “exceptional circumstances” to analyze occasions in which an empress displays significant political initiative and power in the sources.

Nonetheless, these Byzantinists have made tremendous strides within what is a demanding field. Historical research on the Byzantine Empire requires one to deal with a large amount of diverse material.<sup>20</sup> Byzantium was an empire with a Roman identity, a millennium (330 - 1453 AD) of cultural, religious and economic transformations, and a territory that at different times extended over the whole of the Mediterranean, the Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East. In

---

<sup>19</sup> Joy Parr, “Gender History and Historical Practice.” *Canadian Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (September 1995): 362, <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ehost/detail?sid=ba6b8ed7-5fae-40a4-b7f8-04b5edbec76e%40sessionmgr112&vid=1&hid=123&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=9509246609>: “Gender history assumes that masculinity and femininity do not exist in isolation from each other, and femininity and masculinity are not cultural universals but vary with other forms of power.”

<sup>20</sup> A variety of books have been published with the intention of addressing the issue of accessibility of histories on the Byzantine Empire. Two exceptional books are Warren Treadgold’s *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. California: Stanford University Press, 1997; and Averil Cameron’s *The Byzantines*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.

addition, the scholars discussed here had to write women back into the field's "consciousness" while expanding what tradition had accepted as historically significant. A brief example of conventional Byzantinist historiography will elucidate the "tradition" of the field.

In the early 1950s, with his magisterial and Marxist inflected *History of the Byzantine State*, George Ostrogorsky took a singular moment, in a book otherwise silent on women, to argue in his discussion of mid-eleventh century dynastic politics, "the incompetence of the two empresses, their hatred for each other, very soon made it clear that it was essential to have a man at the head of the government."<sup>21</sup> The imperial women to whom he was referring to were Zoe and Theodora. In 1028 AD, Zoe had become the ruler of the empire when her father, Constantine VIII, had died. For nearly twenty years Zoe, and at times her younger sister Theodora, had ruled. In his text, Ostrogorsky dismissively labels Zoe as "elderly," "long past her prime," and "aged."<sup>22</sup> Ostrogorsky's text gives the reader the impression that Zoe was a woman of declining years who busied herself with an embarrassing lust for new husbands and young sexual partners. Rather than identifying her as a political figure concerned with matters of state and governance, Ostrogorsky creates a portrait of Zoe that obscures and trivializes her involvement in imperial affairs. He utilizes the conventional definition of power as masculine and concludes that, since Zoe was not a man, she was completely unfit to rule. In doing so Ostrogorsky relies on the more lurid

---

<sup>21</sup> George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 289.

<sup>22</sup> George Ostrogorsky, 286.

accounts of the empress' life in the *Chronographia* of the eleventh-century historian and politician Michael Psellos, who was present at court during Zoe's rule. Yet a more careful reading of this and other sources exposes other aspects of Zoe's political activity.<sup>23</sup>

A decade after Ostrogorsky's treatment of Zoe, Romilly Jenkins was writing in a similar fashion about the eighth-century empress Irene. She had been the sole ruler of the empire for over twenty years (780 - 802), and had ruled five years previous to that with her husband Leo IV.<sup>24</sup> Throughout her time as empress, she had been heavily involved in governance: directing the Byzantine armies against Arab and Bulgarian attacks, outmaneuvering the Iconoclast military establishment, ending the Iconoclast controversy, and keeping up diplomatic relations with Charlemagne, King of the Franks, and the Papacy. Despite all this, Jenkins states, "She was destined to rule, on and off, for twenty-

---

<sup>23</sup> Michael Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus*, translated by E.R.A. Sewter (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 138-139. According to Psellos, the citizens of Constantinople were fiercely loyal to the Empresses Zoe and Theodora, and when Zoe's adoptive son, Michael V, dared to exile her from the city, the citizens violently revolted and descended upon the palace to gouge out the young man's eyes, an event which Michael writes he witnessed first-hand: "The indignation, in fact, was universal and all were ready to lay down their lives for Zoe. As for the common mob, it was already on the move, greatly stirred at the prospect of exercising tyranny over him who had himself played the tyrant. And the women... I myself saw some of them... shouting and beating their breasts and lamenting terribly at the empress' misfortune... 'Where can she be,' they cried, 'the mistress of all the imperial family, the rightful heir to the Empire'... they took up their positions for battle, at first in small groups... later, with all the citizen army, they marched in one body to attack."

<sup>24</sup> Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 419-420. Treadgold does a fine job of detailing the imperial work Empress Irene accomplished. It should be noted that his portrait does come from a pro-iconodule position rather than as a result of gender analysis. Irene was an Orthodox hero for ending Iconoclasm in the eighth century. An excerpt from *A History*: "the empress briskly announced a campaign against the Arabs, ordering the tagmata to set out for the East. When they obeyed, the empress had Stauracius lead loyal troops from Thrace into Constantinople. Then she sent to the tagmata in Anatolia and discharged some fifteen hundred of them for their recent rioting against her council. She conducted this operation so skillfully that the soldiers obeyed without resistance. She then replaced the chief iconoclast bishops and reconvoed her council at Nicaea, the site of the First Ecumenical Council."

two years after her husband's death, and they were years of almost unrelieved disaster. She was, by any standards, medieval or modern, a bad woman; and, what was worse, an incapable, and irresponsible prince."<sup>25</sup> Both Ostrogorsky and Jenkins do not care for the details of these empresses' political participation, and in any case, their historical understanding did not allow for a woman to rule in her own right. The way in which these historians have chosen to frame these female rulers effectively disconnects them from active, and legitimate, participation in politics.

The years between 1999 and 2001 saw the heaviest activity in research concerning Byzantine empresses, and questions were raised about whether these women exercised direct or indirect political power. Liz James, Barbara Hill, Judith Herrin, and Lynda Garland published substantially during this time period in an effort to reclaim the lives of Byzantine empresses and to criticize the field's traditional methodology. By analyzing the representations of empresses in literary and material sources, these Byzantinists sought to recreate the political position of empresses in the Byzantine system of governance.

All of these scholars agree that empresses have been overlooked in past historiography and that they continue to be largely disregarded. Yet, while they acknowledge the importance of gender analysis, they still eschew an expanded analysis of the varied feminine and masculine political roles associated with the Byzantine throne. As a consequence, their scholarship consists of either generalized surveys or of specialized case studies of two or three empresses of

---

<sup>25</sup> Romilly Jenkins, *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries (AD 610 – 1071)* (New York: Random House, 1966), 90.

a given time period. Neither approach offers a sense of the empresses' roles and participation in Byzantine history, in effect keeping them detached from the historical narrative.

Liz James and Barbara Hill emphasize the importance of applying gender to the study of the position of Byzantine empresses within the political realm. Both focus on what they feel is the misogynistic structure of the Byzantine political system, which they believe plays a part in denying empresses true access to power.<sup>26</sup> In Liz James' 2001 book, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium*, she states that "within the misogynist structure of the Byzantine Empire, empresses had to juggle two contradictory elements: their status as women and their position as empresses."<sup>27</sup> James concludes that female power is essentially a paradox and that "the empress can never be seen as a woman."<sup>28</sup> Who this "woman" is, James does not define, and therefore insinuates that only one understanding of "woman" can be applied to all female subjects in the Byzantine world. It would be quite right to assert that the set of ideas inflecting the Byzantine view of a female ascetic – to give but one example – is different than those ideas associated with the privileged position of the Byzantine empress; but this is not what James argues. Her conclusion is disheartening,

---

<sup>26</sup> A few of Liz James' and Barbara Hill's publications: James, Liz and Barbara Hill. "Zoe. The Rhythm Method of Imperial Renewal." In *New Constantines*, edited by Paul Magdalino, 215-230. UK: Aldershot, 1994; James, Liz. 'Goddess, Whore, Wife or Slave? Will the Real Byzantine Empress Please Stand Up.' In *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, edited by A. Duggan, 123-40. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997; James, Liz. *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium*. London: Leicester University Press, 2001; Hill, Barbara. *Imperial Women in Byzantium, 1025-1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology*. London: Longman, 1999; *Women, Men, and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James, London, 1997.

<sup>27</sup> Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 4.

<sup>28</sup> James, 166.

considering that the stated aim of her book is to “look at the power and prestige that might have lain behind the title ‘empress’ and the ways in which ‘empress’ was an official role.”<sup>29</sup> James, in the end, asserts that an empress depended on the emperor for power – that she had the power to act only “where the emperor was not interested” or “when the emperor allow(ed) it.”<sup>30</sup> In a collaborative effort, James and Barbara Hill state that it was through an empress’ relationship with the emperor<sup>31</sup> and through “favourable circumstances,” such as periods of regency, that empresses gained access to temporary power.<sup>32</sup> Their argument is ultimately focused the position and power of the emperor, as they insist that power resided in an empress only in proximity to, or as proxy for the emperor, rather than examining the power and responsibilities that came with the position of empress.

Barbara Hill continues with this line of thinking in her 1997 piece, “Imperial Women and the Ideology of Womanhood in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.” Hill states that the most “favourable circumstance” in which an empress could wield power was through the assumption of the role of the widowed mother; thus, through a regency an empress could gain the greatest access to power similar to that of the emperor.<sup>33</sup> The crux of Hill’s argument is that those empresses who had lost their husbands and had children not yet of age to rule the empire

---

<sup>29</sup> James, 2.

<sup>30</sup> James, 73.

<sup>31</sup> Liz James and Barbara Hill, “Women and Politics in the Byzantine Empire: Imperial Women,” in *Women in Medieval European Culture*, edited by Linda E. Mitchell (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 162.

<sup>32</sup> James and Hill, 170.

<sup>33</sup> Barbara Hill, “Imperial Women and the Ideology of Womanhood in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” in *Women, Men, and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, edited by Liz James (London: Routledge, 1997), 77.

obtained the greatest amount of power because they were acting as mothers and did not threaten a masculinist understanding of power.<sup>34</sup> While these situations were certainly moments in which a different sort of imperial power could be exercised, Hill mistakenly reinforces the idea that empresses did not otherwise possess power. I suggest here that empresses were already in functioning positions of power, and it was not only in times of contingency that such power could be legitimately and practically exercised.

Liz James reiterates Hill's argument in *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium*, stating that empresses "could be powerful but could never threaten masculinity."<sup>35</sup> Again, James remains vague, and we are unsure of what type of masculinity she is addressing, since she has not examined this aspect of imperial experience in her book. A further problem that remains is the assumption that an empress would need to threaten masculinity to achieve power. Since James is essentializing masculine power, she assumes that a form of authority that does not fit into that conventional understanding must somehow threaten or destroy that model in order to exist. A less exclusive conceptualization of the imperial feminine and masculine would enable us to view feminine and masculine power as complementary rather than oppositional. Without recognizing a place for feminine power in the Roman/Byzantine political system, or effectively discussing the important place of the empress in what was an active partnership with the emperor, scholars have fallen back on positing a weak male to explain how and why the empress continuously exercised political power in the history of the

---

<sup>34</sup> Hill, 83.

<sup>35</sup> James, 4.

Byzantine Empire. A less exclusionary conceptualization of the imperial feminine and masculine would enable us to view feminine and masculine power as equivalent and complementary rather than oppositional. Expanding on Gisela Bock's 1992 arguments about "difference in equality" and "equality in difference,"<sup>36</sup> this thesis argues that the political relationship between emperor and empress was a collegial co-rulership. For example, while the emperor was often representative of the army and military power, the empress often took on the equal, complementary role of religious advocate or patroness. Nonetheless, these roles were certainly not exclusive and could be edited as the empire's needs, and the rulers' abilities, dictated. And other powers, such as taxation and the distribution of patronage, were often shared.

Lynda Garland's work on Byzantine empresses mines the sources and offers comprehensive information on the various imperial women she examines. Garland takes interest in empresses across the entire history of the Byzantine Empire. Her writing is more narrative driven and less theory oriented, while many of the sources she uses are examined somewhat uncritically, leading to the impression that the empress' position remained relatively unchanged over the course of more than a thousand years. Liz James has criticized Garland for

---

<sup>36</sup> Gisela Bock, Susan James. *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics, and Female Subjectivity*, London: Routledge, 1992, 1: "By looking at the shifting senses of the terms 'equality' and 'difference' as they are employed by different people in different situations, we are reminded that they are not static – no more static, indeed, than the experiences and forms of existence to which they refer."

writing biographies concentrating on personalities,<sup>37</sup> while Barbara Hill disparages Garland for producing “theoretically inadequate” work that “takes too simple a view of ideology.”<sup>38</sup> Garland’s biographical approach can certainly raise some questions<sup>39</sup> as biography can work against the renegotiation of the place of the empress in history, given that the genre can encourage a focus on a historical agent who is displaced from or functions beyond the imperial context she has been a part of.

In her book, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527-1204*, Garland states that empresses were “naturally bound by the wishes and temperaments of their husbands,”<sup>40</sup> which is not unlike Liz James’ assertion that the empress could only be active in governance where the emperor allowed her to be.<sup>41</sup> In addition to employing the trope of “exceptional circumstances”<sup>42</sup> to describe how an empress might wield power, Garland also contends that an

---

<sup>37</sup> Liz James, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 1. James writes: “Coupled with this personalized, narrative approach, perhaps understandably consequent with it, is the sense that some empresses might be very powerful and wield great authority, but that this depended very much on their personalities and the circumstances surrounding them.” An ironic criticism since this is ultimately what James reflects in her own work.

<sup>38</sup> Hill, 76-77. Here, Barbara Hill, is criticizing an article Lynda Garland wrote some ten years earlier, “The Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women,” *Byzantion*, 58 (1998): 361-93.

<sup>39</sup> Ann-Louise Shapiro, “Talking Back to the Beadle,” *History and Theory, Studies in the Philosophy of History: History and Feminist Theory*, Vol. 31, No. 4, *Beiheft 31: History and Feminist Theory* (December 1992): 14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2505412>.

Joan W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 15-16. Scott rejects biography because it assumes that “agency is an expression of autonomous individual will, rather than the effect of a historically defined process which forms subjects.”

<sup>40</sup> Lynda Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527 – 1204* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.

<sup>41</sup> James, 76.

<sup>42</sup> Garland, 1. Garland states: “Empresses could also in exceptional circumstances rule in their own right, though it was considered more normal that they should take the opportunity to choose a husband and make him emperor.”

empress' main weakness lay in not being able to lead an army.<sup>43</sup> The assertion that a woman's inability to physically lead armies or go to war, has often been used to discursively keep women from power, not just in the Roman period but, throughout the centuries until today. While an empress did not normally lead an army in person, this did not mean that she was powerless; indeed, many an emperor sent generals to lead their armies in their stead.

In a different direction, within Garland's writing there are moments of, perhaps unintentional, recognition of power in the position of empress. In her chapter titled "Sophia (565-601)," dedicated to an important sixth century Byzantine empress, who will be examined in chapter two below, Garland states that the empress "not only played an influential part in government, but one that was publicly recognized."<sup>44</sup> In addition to the written sources, Garland studies imperial coinage to gain a sense of the public image of the empress, and points to Sophia's image on a few mintings alongside that of her husband's, to propose the idea of co-rulership between the two.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, she points out that when Sophia's husband, Justin II, was finally deemed to be completely insane, it was to her that the court turned "for advice on how to proceed with government."<sup>46</sup> For Liz James and Barbara Hill, the moment Sophia took over the throne for her husband would have marked the beginning of her legitimate political career, but Garland places her exercise of power earlier. Sophia had already had a career in government as an empress and as a co-ruler, so her position at the centre of an

---

<sup>43</sup> Garland, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Garland, 41.

<sup>45</sup> Garland, 50-51.

<sup>46</sup> Garland, 50.

extensive network of power within the empire's administrative apparatus, as well as her experience in managing this network, meant that she was the best positioned and qualified to select the next ruler of the empire. Garland notes, "compared to her aunt, it is clear that she possessed more real power than Theodora<sup>47</sup> and wielded it more openly, but at the same time she had the misfortune of outliving her husband, from whom her status was technically derived."<sup>48</sup> This statement echoes the assertions of Garland's contemporaries that an empress' power came from the emperor, and not through her own position. In the end, Garland also concedes that real power is male power, the emperor's power.

Judith Herrin, in *Women in Purple*, imparts autonomy to her empresses and sees their clear involvement in the empire's governance. Her book is concerned with three empresses in particular: Irene of the eighth century, and Euphrosyne and Theodora of the ninth century. These are women who, for Herrin, were able to exercise power through their good fortune as regents. She comments, "By the middle of the fifth century, this commitment to the dynastic principle ensured that sisters, daughters and widows of emperors might all play a significant part in the transition of rulers."<sup>49</sup> While Herrin genders "rulers" as masculine, she does point out that these empresses were able to exercise indirect power that allowed them to participate somewhat in military decisions.

---

<sup>47</sup> The sixth-century empress Theodora is one of the most well-known outside the field, and will be examined further on in this thesis.

<sup>48</sup> Garland, 57.

<sup>49</sup> Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), 6.

While Liz James and Lynda Garland contend that women were weak because they could not physically lead their troops into battle,<sup>50</sup> Herrin points out that there existed many an “armchair” ruler who used generals to perform various military tasks, including leading and commanding an army. Simply because an empress did not physically lead her troops to war did not mean that she could not initiate their movement.<sup>51</sup> For Herrin, an empress could be just as effective a ruler as an emperor, and she argues: “Once they have the chance to exercise power in their own name...women are just as purposive and effective as men.”<sup>52</sup> Her idea that an empress’ power was contingent on the emperor’s permission, or his absence, weakens her argument.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, her approach to revealing the power of an empress in terms of how much she was *like* the emperor causes Herrin’s discussion to fall back into the convention that legitimate power is masculine.

Diliana Angelova’s 2004 article, “The Ivories of Ariadne,” is the most recent work examined here, and in it we see the most effective application of gender analysis. Angelova focuses on the early period of Byzantium, yet her methodology can readily be used to examine empresses throughout the Byzantine period. Angelova draws an important link between the Roman and Byzantine eras and finds precedent for Byzantine imperial feminine power in the Roman Empire. Angelova takes the reader back to Livia, the first Roman

---

<sup>50</sup> James, 5; Garland, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Herrin, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Herrin, 240.

<sup>53</sup> Herrin, 34. Herrin states here that “when men could not perform, women could act in their place”.

empress, and effectively sets up a legacy of active power for subsequent empresses. She makes this connection by citing, among others, the fourth century pagan poet Claudian, who compared the virtues of Roman empresses from the inception of the Roman Empire to his days, making – of course – no distinction between Roman and Byzantine empresses.<sup>54</sup> Angelova also employs visual material effectively in tracing the changing nature of an empress' power through the early centuries of the Byzantine Empire. While fecundity may have been an essential attribute in early Roman empresses, by the time of Flaccilla, a fourth century empress of the Theodosian dynasty, empresses were appearing on coinage in garments similar to those of the emperor, marking significant innovation in deconstructing gendered concepts of ruler ship.<sup>55</sup> Angelova notes, that on Flaccilla's coin, she is the first empress to wear a diadem identical to that of the emperor, and is also the first empress to be depicted with *paludamentum*, a garment which traditionally represented military involvement, and which was a powerful symbol in Augustan imagery.<sup>56</sup> Her careful examination of visual materials displays the wealth of evidence relating to empresses' imperial power and begs for further engagement with the implications of such representations.

Angelova interprets examples of coinage as signifying the empress' authority in the *imperium*. When describing a coin on which the Empress Sophia and her husband, Emperor Justin II, sit on a throne side-by-side, she notes that

---

<sup>54</sup> Diliaana Angelova, "The Ivories of Ariadne and Ideas about Female Imperial Authority in Rome and Early Byzantium," *Gesta* 43, no.1 (2004), 1.

<sup>55</sup> Angelova, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Kenneth G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 34. Kenneth Holum believes that the *paludamentum* and diadem signaled, what he believes, to be a process of assimilation that replaced the earlier practice of separate attributes in imagery for emperors and empresses.

the emperor carries the globe, or *globus cruciger*, while the empress carries the scepter, the imperial trappings of political power and imperial dominion. While Liz James termed this instance as a representation of “ambiguous symbols of imperial power,”<sup>57</sup> Angelova notes that the scepter and the *globus cruciger*, traditionally visual attributes of the gods, had entered imperial iconography during the early Roman Empire when Livia was prominently displayed on coinage with a scepter in hand, and other mintings depicted gods sitting on a *globus* on their reverse.<sup>58</sup> In the Byzantine period, the scepter and *globus cruciger* were carried over into imperial iconography, albeit the *globus cruciger* now had a cross on its top to signify its Christian context. For Angelova, such symbols signified the empress’ power, and, in her opinion, clearly identify the empress as co-ruler.<sup>59</sup> These conclusions are important in the effort to recognize transformations and innovations in imperial conceptualizations, and Angelova’s article emphasizes the crucial connection between the early Roman Empire and the Byzantine period, by using the specific examples of two of Ariadne’s ivories. Before Ariadne, and afterwards, there were centuries in which feminine and masculine imperial representations were being constructed and changed in multifaceted ways, and it is vital to explore these observations at a more expansive level, which this thesis seeks to do.

In the proceeding chapters, this thesis will examine conceptualizations of imperial femininity and masculinity and seek to gain a sense of changing

---

<sup>57</sup> James, 140.

<sup>58</sup> Angelova, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Angelova, 5.

representations from the first century BC until the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. In the process, it will monitor the interplay between feminine and masculine imperial power, and seek to expand the understanding of the position of empress as one that operated in conjunction and not in competition with, or substitution for, that of the emperor. It is not enough to say that women participated in history – the challenge here is rather to use gender as a question of historical analysis, to examine how it gives meaning to the organization and perception of the position of empress, and to recognize the empress as an essential partner in the imperium.

## CHAPTER ONE: FROM ROMAN REPUBLIC TO DYNASTIC MONARCHY, THE RISE OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

*She [Livia] occupied a position of great prominence, far above all women of former time, so that she could at any time receive the senate and such of the people as so she wished to greet her in her house. This was also inscribed in the public records.<sup>60</sup>*

After the Roman Republic fell in 27 BC amidst civil war, the positions of the Empire's first emperor and empress began to be carved out of the Republic's institutional framework by the founders of the reigning Julio-Claudian dynasty, Augustus and Livia. With this new imperial government came a transformation of the social structure of the Roman Empire through a series of projects of religious, cultural, and moral restoration. An attempted revival of traditional religion came first in 29 BC, which, as Geoffrey Sumi points out, was "not a simplistic revival of the past...but rather a revival of the values of early Rome within the context of Imperial Rome."<sup>61</sup> This revival of tradition was a crucial part of Augustus' attempt to stabilize his essentially monarchical domination of the state. This was vital, as a similar attempt by his adoptive uncle, Julius Caesar, who had been stabbed to death by members of the Senate barely twenty years earlier, had clearly not

---

<sup>60</sup> Cassius Dio, *History of Rome*, Volume IV, Book 57, 12. [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10883](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10883).

<sup>61</sup> Geoffrey S. Sumi, *Ceremony and Power: Performing Politics in Rome between Republic and Empire* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 244.

been well received.<sup>62</sup> Legislative reforms reinstated the public profile and state support of cult priests and priestesses, particularly the Vestal Virgins, who were female members of a revered ancient cult dating back to the Roman Kingdom (753 – 509 BC).<sup>63</sup> Such reforms coincided with an extensive reconstruction of temples dedicated to the gods and were deliberately publicized to the Roman public. Richard Beacham states that “in order to lend authority, legitimacy, and stability to the ideological foundations of the new political order, the principate constantly sought to ground these wherever possible in established belief and tradition.”<sup>64</sup> The renewal of traditional religious practice was not only an effective means of revitalizing the morale of Roman citizens after a century of civil war and uncertainty. Representations of Roman deities in artistic expression such as statuary would also become powerful symbols used to legitimate the rule of Rome’s new imperial rulers through the familiarity evoked in images of the ancient gods. In 121 AD, Suetonius, a Roman historian and Emperor Hadrian’s

---

<sup>62</sup> Plutarch, *The History of Julius Caesar. Newly Translated from the Original Greek of Plutarch: A Translation of a Selection from Plutarch’s ‘Vitae Parallelae.’* Eighteenth Century Collections Online, (London, 1771): 157-158, [http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW103669267&source=gale&userGroupName=sfu\\_z39&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE](http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW103669267&source=gale&userGroupName=sfu_z39&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE). Plutarch dramatically writes: “Whatever way he turned, he met with blows, and saw their swords leveled at his face and eyes, and was baited on all sides like a wild beast taken in a toil...he was pushed, either by chance, or by design of the murderers, to the pedestal on which Pompey’s statue stood, which by that means was greatly tainted with his blood; so that Pompey himself may seem to have presided at this execution of vengeance upon his enemy, who fell at his feet, and expired after receiving a multitude of wounds...”

<sup>63</sup> Inge Kroppenber, “Law, Religion, and Constitution of the Vestal Virgins”, *Law & Literature* 22, no.3, (Fall 2010): 419, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/lal.2010.22.3.418>. Kroppenber also notes that later on during the early Roman Republic “the Vestals represented the living Roman Republic.”(426)

<sup>64</sup> Richard Beacham, “The Emperor as Impresario: Producing the Pageantry of Power,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, edited by Karl Galinsky (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 167. Beacham centres on the theatre as the focus for the adaptation and celebration of earlier art forms by Augustus.

secretary,<sup>65</sup> wrote: “Furthermore, he [Augustus] restored ruined or burned temples, beautifying these and others with the most lavish gifts: for instance, a single donation to Capitoline Jupiter of 16,000 lb of gold, besides pearls and precious stones to the value of 500,000 gold pieces.”<sup>66</sup> Regardless of whether Suetonius thought the expenditure was extravagant or admirable, it was clear that a remarkable effort was being made to establish confidence in the shift from Republic to imperial rule.

Nearly a decade later, Augustus and Livia together set about implementing the empire’s cultural revitalization, while maintaining the push towards traditional Roman values. The citizens of Rome saw the revival of the Secular Games (*Ludi Saeculares*), a religious celebration that had been held in Rome before the rise of the Republic, but had long since been halted. The Games included major events such as sacrifices and theatrical performances. In 17 AD, to encourage the return to the traditional worship of the deities, Augustus commissioned the well-respected poet Horace to write a poem to be performed at the Games. The intention of the poem was to impress upon Rome’s citizens that it was their indifference to the ancient gods that had led to the destruction of the empire during the Republic. Horace wrote, “You will remain sullied with the guilt of your fathers, Roman, until you have rebuilt the temples and restored all the ruined

---

<sup>65</sup> Henry A. Sanders, “Suetonius in the Civil Service under Hadrian,” *The American Journal of Philology* 65, no.2 (1944), 114, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/290993>. Suetonius was dismissed from the position of imperial secretary in 121 AD; however, it seems that he remained in favour with the Emperor, despite the rumours that he was dropped from the position due to an affair with the Empress Sabina. Barry Baldwin, “Suetonius: Birth, Disgrace and Death,” *Acta Classica* 18 (1975), 69.

<sup>66</sup> Suetonius, “Augustus,” in *Twelve Caesars*, translated by Robert Graves (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), 63.

sanctuaries with their dark images of the gods, befouled with smoke.”<sup>67</sup> As if to answer Horace’s invocation, the imperial couple had already initiated the construction of such temples, and so the Romans were well on their way to redemption. The Games’ sacrificial format, which had previously offered sacrifices to the gods of the underworld, was edited to include other deities, such as Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth, and Terra Mater, the personification of “Earth Mother,” as recipients.<sup>68</sup> This revision of themes coincided nicely with the moral reforms surrounding family and children that had been embarked upon the previous year.

In 18 BC, when Augustus revisited the Julian Laws<sup>69</sup> in areas concerning marriage and childbirth, it became increasingly apparent that family was the focus of his revisions. Marriage, and especially childbirth, was encouraged through monetary incentives, and penalties were imposed on young celibates and widows. Those who remained unwed were prevented from receiving inheritances, while those who married but had no children could only receive half of their inheritances. This applied across the board to both women and men, since they were now each defined as Roman citizens.<sup>70</sup> Imperial iconography

---

<sup>67</sup> Horace, *Carmen*, 3.6, quoted in Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, translated by Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1988), 102.

<sup>68</sup> Denis Feeney, *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts, and Beliefs* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1988), 29.

<sup>69</sup> The Julian Laws (Lex Julia) are ancient Roman laws introduced by the Julian family in the 5th century BC. Although revised and added to over the centuries, it was not until Augustus’ extensive marriage legislation that the laws were significantly altered.

<sup>70</sup> Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986), 39. “While women were now included as Roman citizens, and held greater autonomy than their ancient counterparts, they could not vote or run for public office.” Judith Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce, and Widowhood* (London: Routledge, 2002), 20: “Women were no longer subjected to the authority of their husbands, they no longer had to be chaperoned in public.”

was essential in solidifying this legal intention to incorporate the family as inseparable from the state. As the years went on during Augustan rule, it would be this institutionalization of the family that would prove to be the most effective experiment embarked upon to ensure the imperial succession of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.<sup>71</sup>

Livia married Augustus in 39 BC, while she was pregnant with her second son from her first marriage. Both had divorced their previous spouses in order to marry, and their union came to represent the ideal in harmonious marriage. While Livia would not be given the title of Empress by the Senate until 14 AD, after the death of Augustus, she governed alongside her husband throughout their marriage. Livia was already in an influential position before her marriage to Augustus. As the daughter of a Roman Senator and nobleman, she not only commanded a great deal of wealth, but would give Augustus a friendly link to those nobles and Senators who may have been hesitant about his new imperial rule.

Livia therefore set the feminine imperial standard through the various characteristics reflected in her images. In her 1946 article, "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult," Gertrude Grether writes that before Augustus' death, Livia managed her own property and administered her own finances; she "was endowed with the sacred inviolability formerly characteristic of the tribune's

---

<sup>71</sup> Beth Severy, *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 6. Beth Severy notes that Augustus did not have a set plan in the beginning of how he was going to set about "reviving" the empire and legitimizing his rule. It was through a series of experiments over fifty years by himself and other members of the dynasty, including Livia, that were found to have successfully assisted the shift from republic to empire.

office...and her influence in the court was such that ambassadors to Augustus often approached her to endeavor to make her an advocate of their causes."<sup>72</sup>

Fecundity, philanthropy, and stability were a few of the ideals she would come to represent in her position as empress; they did not set her apart from imperial power but reinforced her status.

In 7 BC, Livia would erect and consecrate a temple to the goddess Concordia, a deity that would become important in the way her own statuary was depicted.<sup>73</sup> Concordia represented unity, stability, and harmony within marriage, but also within the body politic in general. According to Cassius Dio, a second century Roman consul and historian, Livia and Augustus' relationship constituted a stable, harmonious, and united household. Livia was also her husband's most trusted partner in decision-making, as we know through the carefully, and formally, constructed letters he wrote to her seeking her counsel. Augustus was not only open about Livia's input, but also these letters exist as a formal indication of their collegial rulership. Suetonius writes, "All important statements made to individuals, and even to his wife Livia, were first committed to notebooks and then repeated aloud; he was haunted by a fear of saying either too much or

---

<sup>72</sup> Gertrude Grether, "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult," *The American Journal of Philology* 67, no.3 (1946): 222, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/291543>.

<sup>73</sup> Marleen Boudreau Flory, "Sic Exempla Parantur: Livia's Shrine to Concordia and the Porticus Liviae," *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte* 33, no.3 (3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr., 1984): 309, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4435892>. Flory comments that "the *Fasti* show that Livia alone sponsored ("praestitit ipsa") and dedicated the shrine ("dedicate Livia").

Grether, 226. Grether points out that "She (Livia) herself erected a temple to Concordia, apparently honoring the harmony of the imperial marriage."

C.J. Simpson, "Livia and the Constitution of the Aedes Concordiae. The Evidence of Ovid *Fasti* 1.637ff.," *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geshichte* 40, no.4 (1991): 451, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4436213>. Simpson contends that Livia was a participant in both the rebuilding and the constitution of the Temple of Concord. The constitution would have involved a decision by the Senate, as well as a ceremony formally inaugurating the site.

too little if he spoke off-hand.”<sup>74</sup> The efficiently and collaboratively run imperial household became synonymous with the stability of the Empire.

In 2 BC, the Roman Senate gave Augustus the title *Pater Patriae*.<sup>75</sup> Richard Jackson King notes that, “applied in the late Republic to Romulus as founder, the title *parens patriae* or *Pater Patriae* labeled men who had founded communities or saved citizens or the whole state.”<sup>76</sup> In addition to this paternal *nomen*, Augustus took on traditional masculine positions of authority; he was the commander of the Roman army, and in 12 BC, he held the position of *Pontifex Maximus*, or the chief priest, who was responsible for all the state cults.<sup>77</sup> Rather than live, as was customary, in the Forum in an official home adjacent to that of the Vestal Virgins, Augustus made his own home public property. His statuary in fact reflected both of these significant positions: as a military general and high priest. Successive Roman emperors would emulate this ideological program in their own statuary. This was all in addition to Augustus’ identification with various commanding deities, such as Jupiter or Apollo. In the same way, statuary of Livia took on a number of different forms, always with familial and religious themes that were familiar to the Roman citizenry. A prominent example of this religious,

---

<sup>74</sup> Seutonius, “Augustus,” in *Twelve Caesars*, translated by Robert Graves (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), 90.

<sup>75</sup> Hans-Peter Schonbeck, “Augustus als “Pater Patriae” und “Pater Familias” im Zweiten Tristienbuch des Ovid,” *Hermes* 126, no.4 (1998): 455, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4477274>. Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, 15, 858-860) in Schonbeck’s article: “Iuppiter arces temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis, terra sub Augusto est; pater est rector uterque.” Charles Martin translates this as, “Jupiter rules kingdoms above as well as air and sea and earth below; on earth Augustus rules, and like great Jove he is our father and our governor.” Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Charles Martin (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004): 553.

<sup>76</sup> Richard Jackson King, *Desiring Rome: Male Subjectivity and Reading Ovid’s Fasti* (Chicago: Ohio State University, 2006), 192.

<sup>77</sup> Mary Beard, John A. North, and S.R.F. Price, eds., *Religions of Rome: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 189.

as well as familial, theme can be seen in the Altar of Augustan Peace.

The Altar of Augustan Peace (*Ara Pacis Augustae*), which is now located in its own museum, the *Ara Pacis* Museum of Rome, was consecrated by the Senate in 9 BC, to celebrate the victorious return of Augustus from Gaul and Hispania. The monument was made up of two main structures, all in marble: the interior altar, and the outside walls surrounding it, both of which were covered in processional friezes. The altar was accessed through large marble steps into one of two openings. The eastern portal opened onto the *Via Flaminia*, the main road that led into Rome, while the western portal faced the *Campus Martius*, a public area that held the *Circus Flaminius* (the chariot racing track), *Thermae Agrippae* (the public baths of Agrippa), and where large public assemblies were often held – it was one of the busiest areas of the city of Rome.

While the altar was said to have been constructed to celebrate Rome's military supremacy and the peace that Augustus brought to the empire, the images depicted in the various friezes seem to take on a much more dynastic and religious theme.<sup>78</sup> The frieze on the south side of the altar displays a religious procession in which Augustus is accompanied by women (Livia is the most prominent), his daughter Julia, her son and Augustus' chosen successor

---

<sup>78</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, translated by Betty Rose Nagle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 56. Ovid's *Fasti* links the altar with Augustan peace: "This poem itself has brought me to the Altar of Peace, dedicated on the day before the end of the month. Peace, wreathed in honor of the end of civil war, be with us, as a gentle presence throughout the globe."

Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, translated by P.A. Brunt and J.M. Moore, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 12. Augustus in his *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* ("Achievements of the Divine Augustus") records the altar's dedication: "On my return from Spain and Gaul in the consulship of Tiberius Nero and Publius Quintilius after successfully arranging affairs in those provinces, the senate resolved that an altar of the Augustan Peace should be consecrated next to Campus Martius in honour of my return, and ordered that the magistrates and priests and Vestal virgins should perform an annual sacrifice there."

Agrippa, as well as her other two sons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, along with the men of the court and Senate, and priestly officials (fig.1). Natalie Boymel Kampen remarks that images like the *Ara Pacis* frieze sought to reclaim and maintain the confidence and loyalty of the empire's citizens through examples of familial strength, implicit in the representation of their rulers in their home and through an emphasis on the military success of Augustus' campaigns abroad.<sup>79</sup> Such monuments also achieved the promotion of the future successions of the imperial family and reinforced the idea of women as dynastic links.

On a micro-scale, as we leave behind us Rome's public spaces, the existence of a large number of personal items intended for household and personal use, contained images of the imperial family. Images of the empress, in particular, and reflect a more intimately digested recognition of the person of the empress and her central place in the empire's imperial ideology. The image of Livia graced a number of cameos, both modest and lavish. The Marlborough cameo (fig.2), a fragmentary turquoise cameo dated 9 BC depicts Livia in the guise of Venus, and both she and the smaller figure, perhaps her younger son, Drusus, wear laurel wreaths. Marleen B. Flory asserts that the green turquoise was a colour that signified fertility and "there is virtually no question that the woman is Livia in the guise of Venus Genetrix." Flory maintains that the way in which Livia's tunic slips off her shoulder, and the fact that the laurel wreath remains open, signifies a connection with the sculptural type of a statue depicting

---

<sup>79</sup> Natalie Boymel Kampen, "Between Public and Private," in *Women's History & Ancient History*, edited by Sarah B. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 227. Kampen writes, "The imperial women at Ephesus and on the *Ara Pacis*, as on the Leptis Arch, function as a sign for a specifically family-oriented program, in it, private and state realms blend for political purposes."

the goddess Venus which Julius Caesar commissioned to be built in 46 BC, in order to attribute Venus as the mother of the dynasty.<sup>80</sup> The smaller figure of Livia's son and the closed laurel wreath would then be casting Livia as the beginning and the continuation of the family line. If Livia's image shaped perceptions of the imperial household, Augustus' own actions also played a role in bringing the public perception of the imperial family into sharper focus.

When Augustus' daughter Julia<sup>81</sup> was found to have committed adultery, for which Augustus had stipulated strict punishments in his recent legal reforms, the emperor used his own laws against her in order to preserve the carefully constructed image of the virtuous imperial couple. After Julia was exiled, Augustus declared her marriage to Livia's elder son, Tiberius (Julia's second husband Agrippa had since died), null and void, while Livia's sons were promoted as the new heirs to the imperial couple, and Julia's now disgraced line was demoted. Augustus therefore adopted Livia's two sons, Tiberius and Drusus, and the imperial imagery reflected this new dynastic choice. Julia and her son, Agrippa Postumus, disappeared from the imperial imagery after her exile in 2 BC, particularly in the form of imperial coinage. Coinage, and the images pressed upon them, were a valuable way to spread information about the Empire quickly and widely. They were, therefore, ideal as a means for the dissemination of information regarding a change at the top. Thus a few years later, when Tiberius graced the obverse of his own coin during the first year of his rule as emperor,

---

<sup>80</sup> Marleen B. Flory, "The Symbolism of Laurel in Cameo Portraits of Livia," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, vol.40 (1995), 52-53, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4238728>.

<sup>81</sup> Julia was Augustus' only blood heir, from his second marriage to Scribonia.

his legitimacy was confirmed through the image of his mother Livia, now officially the first empress of the Roman Empire,<sup>82</sup> on the reverse of the coin. As the wife of Augustus and the mother of the new emperor, and of the empire, Livia effectively conveyed a sense of dynastic continuity.

The basic parameters of Augustan imperial power had been firmly put into place during the reign of Livia and Augustus. The empresses who came after Livia continued to be significant figures in the empire's politics, and emperors used the new set of images and moral reforms to assure their own place within the legitimacy of the dynastic line. Those who did not subscribe to this image were summarily deposed.

By 48 AD, Livia's grandson Claudius and Augustus' great-grandniece Messalina had ruled the Roman Empire as emperor and empress for a decade. However, their marriage did not play out as ideally as their predecessors'. Writing after the fact, Tacitus detailed the imperial couple's relationship by highlighting Messalina's involvement in several murders of political rivals and representing Claudius as an inept fool.<sup>83</sup> According to Tacitus, Messalina forced Silius, a consul-designate, to divorce his wife and start a very public affair with the empress, of which Claudius was the only person completely ignorant.<sup>84</sup> Despite her marriage to the emperor, Messalina openly married Silius in 48 AD. G.G.

---

<sup>82</sup> The Senate awarded her the title in 14 AD.

<sup>83</sup> Sandra R. Joshel, "Desire, Empire, and Tacitus' Messalina," *Signs* 21, no.1 (Autumn, 1995): 71. Joshel notes Tacitus' open criticism: "Obsessively desiring and savage, Messalina serves as a device to comment on imperial power and empire."

<sup>84</sup> Garrett G. Fagan, "Messalina's Folly," *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 52, no.2 (2002), 566, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/3556420>. Fagan points out that the story of Messalina's "fall from grace" was "considered so extraordinary by Tacitus that he felt obliged to preface his narrative with an assurance to the reader that, fantastical as it all seems, his account is verified by the verbal and written testimony of his elders."

Fagan posits that, owing to the methodology of Julio-Claudian dynastic marriage, “a princess or empress who took an outsider into her bed was simultaneously taking that outsider into the political heart of the dynasty;”<sup>85</sup> however, this assumes that an emperor’s trysts were tolerated while an empresses’ were not, which serves to disempower women through their sexuality. In actuality, it was quite common that an emperor or empress took various lovers, the distinction between recreational sex and political threat occurred when these relationships purposely sought to disrupt the dynastic order. In Messalina’s case, the act of openly marrying Silius, rather than privately taking him to bed, keeping in mind the imperial presentation of the empress as dynastic link, meant that there was a problem to be dealt with. Messalina’s transgressions could no longer be ignored, and Tacitus wrote of her subsequent fate:

...there stood at her side the tribune, sternly silent, and the freedman, overwhelming her with the copious insults of a servile tongue. Then for the first time she understood her fate and put her hand to a dagger. In her terror she was applying it ineffectually to her throat and breast, when a blow from the tribune drove it through her. Her body was given up to her mother. Claudius was still at the banquet when they told him that Messalina was dead, without mentioning whether it was by her own or another’s hand. Nor did he ask the question, but called for the cup and finished his repast as usual.<sup>86</sup>

Just months after Messalina was beheaded, Claudius adhered to the precedent of “dynastic editing,” and married Augustus’ great-granddaughter, Agrippina, who would become the new link of dynastic legitimacy. The imperial images viewed

---

<sup>85</sup> Garrett G. Fagan, 576.

<sup>86</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, “The Annals,” in *Annals and the Histories*, edited by Moses Hadas, translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (New York: Modern Library, 1942; 2003), 214.

by the Roman public afterwards reflected this turn. The fallen empress suffered *damnatio memoriae* (damnation of memory) as the Senate declared all images and traces of her to be erased from public memory.<sup>87</sup> In effect this meant that all statuary, artwork, coinage, and literature that bore her likeness or preserved her memory was to be wiped out in order to maintain the honour of the empire, and more importantly the newly legitimate dynastic line.

From the time of Agrippina's and Claudius' marriage, the empire's coins almost exclusively focused on the family of Agrippina, with some mintings devoted entirely to her son Nero, who was born in her first marriage. Nero was betrothed to Claudius' daughter, Claudia, and was named Claudius' successor in place of Claudius' son by Messalina, Britannica. Agrippina's powerful position was announced in the coinage produced by the imperial mint through the depiction on the obverse of the heads of both Claudius and Agrippina, facing in the same direction, superimposed over the other. This was the first coinage of the Roman Empire to display the imperial couple together on the obverse, rather than on separate sides. There was, however, a precedent in monarchical coinage: Arsinoe II (316 – 270 BC) had been queen of Thrace, Asia Minor, and Macedonia in her first marriage, and when she married her brother, Ptolemy II (309 – 246 BC), became co-ruler of Egypt with him. Their co-rule was often

---

<sup>87</sup> Susan Wood, "Too-Successful *Damnatio Memoriae*: Problems in Third Century Roman Portraiture," *American Journal Archaeology* 87, no.4 (October 1983): 495, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/504107>. Susan Wood laments some of the more thorough instances of *damnatio memoriae* and the difficulties it poses for positive identification of imperial persons depicted in affected images. "The damage to the ears, foreheads, eyes, noses and mouths does not appear to be the result of a fall, such as would have been caused if the statues or busts had been knocked over, but of hacking, perhaps with a hammer and chisel. The portraits may then have been left exposed to view – a reminder of disgrace, rather than an abolition of memory."

publicized on imperial coinage (fig.3). The coinage of Agrippina and Claudius imitates this conceptualization of collegial rulership with remarkable accuracy. This jugate style on Roman imperial coinage therefore becomes significant in the dynasty's portrayal of a more obvious theme of monarchical rule, which it had shied away from in the beginning of Augustan rule.<sup>88</sup> Along with the visual clues of authority on the coinage, the numerous statues and busts depicted Agrippina, most often with a diadem, a symbol of imperial rule, which marked the official sanction of the role of Agrippina as Claudius' partner in the imperium.<sup>89</sup>

The end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty came in 68 AD with the suicide of Agrippina's son Nero. He had not chosen an heir and had left no close blood-relatives or adopted successors behind to continue the dynasty. What ensued was a period of civil war in which senators, generals and patricians all vied for the position of emperor. In 96 AD, the childless senator Nerva (30-98), who had served under Nero and had been a supporter of the short-lived Flavian dynasty (69 – 96 AD), claimed the empire's throne. Although he died two short years later of natural causes, he had cleverly adopted Trajan, a general in the Roman army, and named him his successor. Nerva's reign initiated the Nerva-Antonine dynasty, which would rule for nearly a century, and was characterized by the adoption of its successors.

Emperor Trajan and empress Plotina had adopted the dynasty's second

---

<sup>88</sup> Jerome Jordan Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 150, "In the late Hellenistic period the conventional distinction that art historians are accustomed to make between 'Greek' and 'Roman' art to a great extent breaks down."

<sup>89</sup> Anthony A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sister of Caligula, Wife of Claudius, Mother of Nero* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1996), 198. Barrett comments, "the jugate type was introduced by Ptolemy II, in the third century BC to celebrate his marriage to his sister, Arsinoe II."

emperor, Hadrian. Hadrian recognized the efficacy of the Julio-Claudian legacy and exploited its potency. Trajan had been well respected by the army, and Plotina had been well known for her virtue, her love of philosophy, and her efforts to improve education. Their heir Hadrian recognized the efficacy of the Julio-Claudian legacy, and he attempted to attain the dynastic strength for the Nerva-Antonine dynasty that the Julio-Claudians had achieved. Mary T. Boatwright writes of Hadrian's campaign of city patronage through monumental engineering and construction of religious and civic buildings that stretched throughout the empire."<sup>90</sup> Hadrian was also known for his unhappy marriage to the empress Sabina, and perhaps more so for his intense relationship with Antinous, a member of his entourage and constant companion during his many campaigns and travels across the empire.

In a room in the Museo della Civiltà Romana, Craig Arthur Williams notes, sit copies of ancient busts of the empress Sabina, emperor Hadrian, and Antinous displayed together,<sup>91</sup> which leans towards an interpretation of Antinous being designated as Hadrian's heir. Indeed, the statuary of Antinous was widespread throughout Rome, and coins were minted both with portraits of Sabina and Antinous. It is interesting that Antinous' position as Hadrian's lover, did not threaten Sabina's position as empress, since he could not hold that position. Instead, Antinous' place as Hadrian's favourite was not criticized or

---

<sup>90</sup> Mary T. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5. Boatwright writes: "Hadrian fostered cities throughout the empire to an extent rarely matched in Roman history, and ancient acclaim followed his engineering projects, financial measures, and social changes he enacted."

<sup>91</sup> Craig Arthur Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 290.

treated with scandal, because he was publicized as Hadrian's successor. However, Antinous mysteriously died on a trip through Egypt with Hadrian, and seven years later, Sabina died as well.<sup>92</sup>

With no children or heir, Hadrian endeavored to construct a dynasty out of a series of contemporaries who had no blood connections to each other. In AD 138, he adopted the governor Antoninus (not to be confused with his lover Antinous) as his son and named him his successor on the condition that Antoninus, in turn, adopt Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus as his sons, and designate them as his heirs at his death. Adoption was by no means an unusual occurrence, Julius Caesar had adopted Augustus, and the process was respected in Roman law as absolutely binding. When emperor Claudius had adopted Nero as his son, and wanted Nero to marry his biological daughter, Octavia, even though the two were not blood-related, the law now considered them brother and sister, and the Roman Senate had to be petitioned to pass an exclusive law that would allow Nero to marry, *de jure*, his own sister.

Yet despite a textual record that speaks little of powerful imperial women during the second century, the emperors of the time had to nevertheless create the fiction of such feminine presence to guarantee a smooth transition between rulers. To that effect visual propaganda was mobilized to cement the dynastic act of adoption. In the ancient city of Ephesus, located near the Aegean Sea in

---

<sup>92</sup> Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 107-108. Crompton mentions that Cassius Dio consulted Hadrian's autobiography, which no longer exists today, and the Roman historian wrote that it was not known whether Antinous had drowned accidentally in the Nile, or had voluntarily sacrificed himself after hearing of a prophecy that in order for Hadrian's rule to last, he would have to surrender his life."

modern day Turkey we find one such visual cue in what is an imperial male adoption scene immortalized in a monumental frieze on the Parthian Monument, which was erected around 170 AD, now fragmentally preserved and housed in the Vienna Museum (fig.4). This frieze depicts the adoption ceremony, which never actually happened, by Hadrian of Antoninus, who in turn adopts Marcus Aurelius and Lucius. Natalie Kampen points out the presence of several imperial women and children on the fragments in association with a sacrifice, and while it is not possible to clearly identify who these women are, Kampen asserts that the parallels between this monument and the Ara Pacis are undeniable: “The imperial women at Ephesus...function as a sign for a specifically family-oriented program,” and the visual representations of the imperial characters are uncannily reminiscent of those of the Julio-Claudian dynasty in the Ara Pacis.<sup>93</sup> The monument that Hadrian constructed was dedicated to a moment that never happened; yet it was created in order in order to tap into the potency of imperial women’s imagery in his effort to establish legitimate dynastic lines.

Marcus Aurelius and his wife, Faustina the Younger (daughter of Antoninus), would become the new imperial couple to represent the glory of familial solidarity that had marked the reign of Livia and Augustus. In addition to being emperor, Marcus Aurelius was also well known as a Stoic philosopher, thus embodying the moral excellence that had been a prominent theme of

---

<sup>93</sup> Natalie Boymel Kampen, “Between Public and Private: Women as Historical Subjects in Roman Art,” in *Women’s History and Ancient History*, edited by Sarah B. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1991), 226-27.

Augustan propaganda.<sup>94</sup> Faustina connected Marcus Aurelius' rule more concretely with Antoninus, being the former emperor's daughter, and continued the construction of temples to the deities that had marked the reigns of the Julio-Claudians. Faustina certainly represented fecundity well, since she bore thirteen children in total; however, she was better known for accompanying her husband on his military campaigns, having been given the moniker Mother of the Camps (*Mater Castrorum*) and revered by the Roman soldiery.<sup>95</sup> Harold Mattingly notes the significant amount of coinage dedicated to Faustina during and after her lifetime, highlighting the Reka Devnia Hoard in Northeastern Bulgaria, the largest single find of Roman silver coins containing, among other issues spanning the period from AD 64 to 238, 3504 issues depicting Faustina. This included a large amount of consecration coinage, which came after she had died in a Cappadocian military camp in 175 AD and Marcus Aurelius had her deified.<sup>96</sup> It was publicized that Marcus Aurelius grieved deeply for his wife of thirty years;

---

<sup>94</sup> Frederick Pollock, "Marcus Aurelius and the Stoic Philosophy," *Mind*, 4 (January 1879): 49-50, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/2246564>. Pollock gives a glowing account of Marcus Aurelius in which he believes that in the emperor's *Commentaries* the reader can find the most accurate and "safe" guide to understanding Stoic philosophy, since he interprets Marcus Aurelius' writings as a personal journal that was not meant for the public's eyes. "The conception of the world as orderly does not only lie at the root of the Stoic system, and explain, as will be presently seen, many of the things that appear strangest in it; we find it constantly treated (by Marcus Aurelius) as something to be kept actively present in the mind, and capable of affording present support and guidance. This it does in two ways: the first bearing immediately upon action, the other more remotely, but not less steadily, through contemplation." He quotes Marcus Aurelius' *Commentaries* as an example, "See whither nature leads you, the universal nature by means of that which you have to do." (Marcus Aurelius, VII 55.)

<sup>95</sup> Harold Mattingly, "The Consecration of Faustina the Elder and Her Daughter," *The Harvard Theological Review* 41, no.2 (April 1948): 148, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1508088>. Mattingly writes: "Faustina died at Halala in Cappadocia in A.D. 175, after loyally sharing with her husband the hardships and dangers of his campaigns."

<sup>96</sup> Mattingly, 148. "In Valeni there were 18 consecration coins out of a total for Faustina of 313 against 354 of Marcus. In Reka Devnia, there were 488 out of a total of 3504 for Faustina against 7716 for Marcus."

Halala, the city where she had died was renamed Faustiniopolis, and the emperor opened a charitable school for orphaned girls which he named Girls of Faustina (*Puellae Fastinianae*).<sup>97</sup>

In 192 AD, the emperor Commodus, the natural-born and only surviving son of Faustina and Marcus Aurelius, was murdered and the empire was again plunged into civil war. After a year of five different emperors, his soldiers declared Septimus Severus, commander of the legions of Pannonia province along the Danube, emperor in 193 AD. As a usurper, Severus needed as many connections with the past as possible, and announced himself to be Marcus Aurelius' adopted son, even though it had been long since that emperor's death. He commemorated the fictive occasion with visual representations that followed the precedent set by Hadrian's Parthian adoption frieze. Severus followed in Julio-Claudian footsteps and, as Charmaine Gorrie observes, was preoccupied with "emphasizing the return to stability brought about by his regime and the resulting restoration and renewal of the Roman state."<sup>98</sup> High on Severus' list of priorities were the Augustan legacy of the promotion of family values, in particular, the abhorrence of adultery by both men and women alike. Cassius Dio, who served as consul during Severus' reign remarked that when he was

---

<sup>97</sup> Michael H. Ballance, "Derbe and Faustiniopolis," *Anatolian Studies* 14 (1964), 141, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/3642469>. Balance remarks: "That the city at Basmakci was the Roman colony Faustiniopolis has long been suspected," Balance goes on to reveal in an image the dedication in limestone at the top of the city's acropolis hill that "makes the suspicion a certainty." He then writes, "Marcus Aurelius elevated to colonial rank the village of Halala, in *radicibus montis Tauri*, where his consort Faustina the Younger died on the journey from Syria in 176. Faustiniopolis appears in Heirocles as a city of Cappadocia Secunda and in the *Notitiae* as a bishopric of the same province." (142)

<sup>98</sup> Charmaine Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage, Imperial Family Roles and the Severan Revival of Moral Legislation," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 53, no.1 (2004): 61, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4436715>.

consul there were three thousand indictments for adultery inscribed on the records.<sup>99</sup> The public image of the empress Julia, Severus' wife, was also an essential part of underlining the imperial family as the foundation of the new dynasty's prosperity and stability.

Julia remained primarily in Rome to manage governmental affairs and to uphold the Severan image while Severus waged endless military campaigns abroad. Her public profile was significant. She took part in the Secular Games, erected temples and buildings to those deities and cults associated with women and family life, particularly the goddess Vesta, guardian of the hearth, symbol of chastity, and the protector of the home and state, and connected to the Vestal Virgins with which the empress Livia had been was intimately involved. In this way, like Livia before her, Julia was portrayed as the loyal and virtuous wife, and, like Faustina, she was given the moniker Master of the Camps, since she too accompanied her husband on his army campaigns on occasion. A change with precedent occurred when Julia was also declared mother of the empire, Senate, and state (*Mater Augustorum, Mater Senatus, Mater Patriae*).<sup>100</sup> Not only was her power publicly recognized with these titles on her statuary and coinage, but also her maternal role as protector was clearly tied to her governance of the

---

<sup>99</sup> Cassius Dio, *Dio's Rome*, Volume 5, Books 61-76 (A.D. 54-211), translated by Herbert Baldwin Foster, 2004, [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10890](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10890). Cassius Dio writes: "Again, he rebuked such persons as were not chaste, even going to the extent of enacting certain laws in regard to adultery with the result that there were any number of prosecutions for that offence. When consul I once found three thousand entered on the docket."

<sup>100</sup> H.W. Benario, "Julia Domna – Mater Senatus et Patriae," *Phoenix* 12, no.2 (Summer, 1958): 67, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1086523>. Benario writes, "It is surely not overly rash to state that Julia Domna surpasses all other empresses of Rome in the number and variety of her titles. The ones most commonly assigned her are *mater castrorum et senatus et patriae*." Benario cites an inscription from the 204 *arcus argentariorum* in Rome's forum boarium, which names the empress as such.

empire.

The Severan dynasty lasted forty years with the succession of Julia and Severus' sons, ending with the anarchy of the Crisis of the Third Century, which nearly destroyed the Roman Empire as civil war, plague, and incessant barbarian invasions afflicted the Roman body politic. In 284, the commander of the imperial bodyguard, Diocletian, was proclaimed emperor by the Roman army, and in a series of events the new emperor divided the administration of the empire into four parts, with two senior emperors, and two Caesars, governing the Eastern and Western portions of the empire. The Caesars would be elevated to senior emperors when their predecessors abdicated, and this complex sequence of succession went relatively smoothly until the Tetrarchy saw its own civil wars in the years 306 – 324, and was ended when Constantine I, then sole Roman emperor of the West, defeated Licinius, sole Roman emperor of the East, at the Battle of Chrysopolis on September 18, 324. Mark Humphries details the propaganda campaign that Constantine initiated immediately following his military success, remarking “Constantine’s mother Helena and his wife Fausta each were accorded the title of Augusta, a move that firmly established the imperial pedigree of both Constantine himself and the sons he was grooming for the imperial succession.”<sup>101</sup> Constantine moved the empire’s capital to the site of the Greek city of Byzantium, renamed it Constantinople, and attempted to stabilize the empire by reverting to the imperial practice that had been laid out

---

<sup>101</sup> Mark Humphries, “From Usurper to Emperor: The Politics of Legitimation in the Age of Constantine,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no.1 (Spring 2008): 97, [http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/journals/journal\\_of\\_late\\_antiquity/v001/1.1.humphries.html](http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/journals/journal_of_late_antiquity/v001/1.1.humphries.html).

centuries before his reign.

The following chapter will examine the continuation as well as the advances that occurred in the conceptualization of the imperial feminine and masculine during the Byzantine period from the rise of Constantine to the sixth century and the end of antiquity. Thus far, we have touched on some of the literary and visual evidence from the early Rome Empire focusing on the imperial family as central to the well being of the state. Traditional religious practice was revitalized, and the stability of marriage emphasized in law, themes which were prevalent in the literary and visual depictions of the imperial family over the centuries. Byzantine imperial families were similarly concerned with images of the family as connected to political relations, paying attention to the legacy of the Roman empire's early dynasties, as well as embarking on innovations of their own.

## CHAPTER TWO: CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION IN BYZANTINE IMPERIAL REPRESENTATIONS

According to Eusebius, shortly after his victory over Licinius, Constantine erected in Rome a monumental statue of himself holding a giant cross, and ordered the following inscription to be placed at the statue's base:

BY VIRTUE OF THIS SALUTARY SIGN, WHICH IS THE TRUE SYMBOL OF VALOR, I HAVE PRESERVED AND LIBERATED YOUR CITY FROM THE YOKE OF TYRANNY. I HAVE ALSO SET AT LIBERTY THE ROMAN SENATE AND PEOPLE, AND RESTORED THEM TO THEIR ANCIENT GREATNESS AND SPLENDOR.<sup>102</sup>

In that same year, 324 AD, two women were given the title of empress: Fausta, the wife of Constantine I; and Helena, his mother.<sup>103</sup> These women became the first Christian Roman empresses, and coins were minted with their images across the empire to mark this change. Helena's coinage bore the legend SECVRITAS REIPVBLICE (security of the republic) while Fausta's was inscribed with the legend SALVS ET SPES REIPVBLICAE (salvation and hope of the republic). The empire's currency identified the imperial women as symbols of the

---

<sup>102</sup> Eusebius, *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine, from AD 306 to AD 337*, Book I, Chapter XL (New Jersey: Evolution Publishing, 2009), 31. The base does not exist today.

<sup>103</sup> Jan Willem Drijvers, "Flavia Maxima Fausta: Some Remarks," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, vol. 4 (1992): 503, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4436264>. Drijvers notes, "not long after Constantine had become sole ruler of the Empire in September 324 he granted her (Fausta) as well as his mother Helena, the title of Augusta."

stability and well being of the republic.<sup>104</sup> Jan Willem Drijvers notes that the production of these coins began in Antioch, and very quickly spread across the empire, with issues minted in Constantinople, Thessalonica, Alexandria, Rome, Trier, Lyons, and several other cities.<sup>105</sup> This thorough diffusion, signaling the new dynasty and administration of the empire, was especially significant at this new beginning. The Roman Empire had emerged from decades of civil war with a new ruler, who was to soon have its capital moved to a new imperial city, while also adopting a new religion as his own. The effort was to depict a strong and stable rule through the imagery of a victorious emperor with two virtuous empresses.

The Constantinian dynasty was, however, met with an early setback to its perceived stability. The circumstances surrounding the death of Fausta only two years after her coronation are somewhat muddled, confused by the fact that her visual and material legacy experienced *damnatio memoriae* at her husband's order. Explanations by Zosimus, a fifth century historian, and Zonaras, a twelfth century historian, are similar. Zosimus writes, "[H]e (Constantine) was filled with arrogance, and thought fit to begin his impiety at home. Without any consideration for natural law he killed his son, Crispus, on suspicion of having

---

<sup>104</sup> Leslie Brubaker and Helen Tobler, "The Gender of Money," *Gender & History* 3, vol.12 (November 2000); 576 – 577, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/10.1111/1468-0424.00201>. Brubaker and Tobler comment that "In coins issued between 324 and 329/30, Helena is accompanied by *securitas reipublice* (security of the republic): Helena has provided for the security of the republic by providing her son as its ruler."

<sup>105</sup> Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992): 42.

had intercourse with his step-mother, Fausta.”<sup>106</sup> Zonaras likewise notes, “It is said that (Constantine), when his wife Fausta, who was mad for her stepson Crispus and, because he resisted her advances, had brought an accusation to his father that she had been violated by him, by his command, had him, a Caesar, killed, and, after he had discovered later that she had lied, also executed her.”<sup>107</sup> David Woods cites the anonymously written fourth century source, *Epitome de Caesaribus*, which states: “[W]hen Constantine had obtained control of the whole Roman Empire by means of his wondrous success in battle, he ordered his son Crispus to be put to death, at the suggestion of his wife Fausta, so they say. Then he killed his wife Fausta by hurling her into boiling baths (*in balneas ardentis coniectam*), when his mother Helena rebuked him with excessive grief for her grandson.”<sup>108</sup> Crispus was Constantine’s son from his first wife, Minerva, whom Constantine had divorced in order to marry Fausta, Emperor Maximian’s daughter, in 307. Maximian was co-emperor with Constantine at the time, and the two had planned to take control of the Tetrarchy, until their alliance unraveled. The explanations given from these various historians raise several significant issues. Both imperial men and women were expected to conform to an ideal type of behavior and, regardless of status, could lose their lives for deviating from it. Timothy Barnes notes that those historians who were hostile to Constantine wrote that Fausta had fallen in love with

---

<sup>106</sup> Zosimus, *New History*, translated by Ronald T. Ridley (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982), 36.

<sup>107</sup> Joannes Zonaras, *The History of Zonaras: From Alexander Severus to the Death of Theodosius*, translated by Thomas M. Banchich and Eugene N. Lane (New York: Routledge, 2009), 199.

<sup>108</sup> David Woods: “On the Death of the Empress Fausta,” *Greece & Rome*, Second Series 45, no.1 (April 1998), 70-71, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/643208>.

Crispus.<sup>109</sup> The pro-Constantine crown, Christian writers in particular, excluded Fausta from their texts because her legacy did not live up to Constantine's careful presentation of his rule, and since the empress was one-half of the imperial partnership, this affect on the image of the stability of the empire through its rulers was potent.<sup>110</sup> Had Fausta not "fallen", she would have been far more powerful; however, she apparently managed to incur the wrath of Constantine and *damnatio memoriae* and thus has very nearly faded from history, while Helena was highlighted as the imperial feminine representative in the empire's first Christian rule.

The treatment of Fausta's image, and the renewed emphasis on the person of, her mother-in-law, Helena, echoes the procedures implemented in the early Roman Empire in regards to threats to dynastic legitimacy. Helena mirrored Livia in several aspects of her rule as empress as well: her guidance in political decision-making, her numerous philanthropic acts, and her persona of virtue and maternal stability.<sup>111</sup> It was only in 395, about 65 years after her death, that Helena was credited with the (almost certainly fictitious) discovery of the True Cross in Jerusalem, when she had embarked on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 326, at the age of nearly eighty.<sup>112</sup> The first source to mention the finding was in

---

<sup>109</sup> Timothy David Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 220-221.

<sup>110</sup> Eusebius does not mention Fausta or Crispus in his *Vita Constantini* (Life of Constantine).

<sup>111</sup> Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 68-69. Drijvers notes that Helena was particularly lauded for, in addition to her finding of the True Cross, her philanthropic acts towards the "poor and helpless," and that Eusebius constantly refers to her as "benevolent" and "pious."

<sup>112</sup> Drijvers, 95. Drijvers points out that the first source that describes the event of the discovery is in Ambrose, Bishop of Milan's *De Obitu Theodosii*, composed in 395.

the writings of Bishop Ambrose, in his 395 oration, *On the Death of Theodosius*, and the story was elaborated on by successive historians, from Rufinus of Aquileia to Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, all fifth-century church historians who each wrote an eponymous ecclesiastical history. Theodoret's version of events reads thus:

When she arrived at the place where the Saviour suffered, she immediately ordered the idolatrous temple, which had been there erected, to be destroyed, and the very materials to be removed. The tomb, which had been so long concealed, was discovered; and three crosses, the memorials of the Lord, were perceived near it. All were of opinion that one of these crosses was that of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the other two were those of the thieves who were crucified with him...The mother of the emperor, on being informed of the accomplishment of what she had most desired, gave orders that some of the nails should be driven into the royal helmet, in order that the head of her child might be preserved from the darts of his enemies.<sup>113</sup>

Jan Willem Drijvers notes that the stories of the discovery related by the historians mentioned above are quite similar. Coupled with Eusebius' tale of Constantine's vision during his epic battle with Licinius, in which "He [Constantine] saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, CONQUER BY THIS,"<sup>114</sup> this discourse about Helena's religious pilgrimage seems to denote a move towards the conceptualization of the positions of the imperial positions as divinely sanctioned – not a completely new concept in imperial representation, but now clearly set in a Christian context. The procession should be seen as a political

---

<sup>113</sup> Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, *Ecclesiastical History: A History of the Church in Five Books, from A.D. 322 to the Death of Theodore of Mopsuestia A.D. 427* (London: S. Bagster, 1843), 62-63.

<sup>114</sup> Eusebius, 23.

decision, made to solidify and legitimize Constantinian rule, not simply a pious act set apart from the empress' role as partner in the imperium.<sup>115</sup> The salvation of the Roman Empire is now, in this new reading of history, attributed to the emperor's divinely sanctioned military triumph, and the empress' public administration and performance of religious devotion.

In the coming years, the symbols of Christianity would prove useful as a political tool. The emperor Theodosius I (347 – 395), who was the last Roman emperor to rule over both the Eastern and Western portions of the empire, declared Nicean Christianity the official state religion in 380 with the Edict of Thessalonica, and oversaw the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381, where heresies such as Arianism, Macedonianism, and Apollonarianism were condemned, and pagan worship was made illegal.<sup>116</sup> These efforts can be dated to the beginning of the Theodosian dynasty when this new imperial family faced numerous challenges and threats: both external and internal. Externally, the Goths were making headway into the areas of Greece, the Balkans, and Rome. Internally, there were threats coming from politicians seeking to increase their influence at court, amidst the chaos of the war raging at a close distance to

---

<sup>115</sup> Kenneth G. Holum, "Hadrian and St. Helena: Imperial Travel and the Origins of Christian Holy Land Pilgrimage," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, edited by Robert G. Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 72. Kenneth Holum remarks that Helena's pilgrimage should be understood as "an imperial progress organized for state purposes."

<sup>116</sup> Stephen Williams and Gerard Friell, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1994), 54: "In May 381, despite the needs of war, Theodosius summoned a new oecumenical council at Constantinople to heal the long-standing doctrinal schism between East and West on the basis of Nicean orthodoxy... The council was naturally dominated by the Greek bishops; Rome and Milan were not represented, and even Timothy of Alexandria arrived later and participated reluctantly, but it was to claim full oecumenical authority."

Constantinople's walls. Upon Theodosius' death in 395, his eldest son, Arcadius, succeeded him as emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, along with his wife Eudoxia as empress. Theodosius' younger son, Honorius, succeeded him as emperor of the Western Roman Empire.

In 400, an elaborate public ceremony was held celebrating Eudoxia's role of empress, despite her already holding the position for five years. Kenneth Holum comments that this event, openly and lavishly honouring Eudoxia's position as empress was certainly connected to the turmoil the empire was experiencing at that time.<sup>117</sup> Gainas, a *magister militum* ("master of the soldiers") of Gothic origin, had occupied Constantinople for six months with his mostly Gothic army. This is not to suggest that there needed to be a crisis for imperial women's power to be invoked, but that the sense of stability that imperial women had come to represent over the years was useful, as was the assertion of the emperor's stability. After Gainas and his troops were expelled from the city, the imperial mints produced a new kind of coin. Coins depicting Eudoxia on the obverse signaled her association with divine rule through the depiction of a hand reaching down from the heavens to place a crown on her head, and highlighted the defeat of the Germanic threat with the image of a seated Victory that was pressed upon the reverse.

From the outset, Eudoxia actively assumed the role of religious advocate and philanthropist. She was a devotee of Nicean Christianity, and the ecclesiastical historian Socrates suggests that Eudoxia used her own finances to

---

<sup>117</sup> Kenneth Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 69.

organize nighttime anti-Arian processions through the city, which drew an even greater number of participants since the empress provided them with silver candlesticks shaped into crosses.”<sup>118</sup> When Eudoxia came into conflict with the archbishop John Chrysostom over her decision to exile and execute the palace eunuch Eutropius,<sup>119</sup> she formed a powerful alliance against him, which included the Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria.<sup>120</sup> The feud had come to a peak after a silver statue was erected of the empress near the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The statue does not survive, but Socrates writes of its erecting and the ensuing scuffle, in his chapter titled “Of Eudoxia’s Silver Statue. John is Exiled a Second Time:”

There stood at this time a silver statue of the empress Eudoxia covered with a long robe, upon a column of porphyry supported by a lofty base, which had been erected so near the church named *Sophia*, that only half the breadth of the street separated them. At this pillar public games were accustomed to be performed; which John regarded from its proximity to the church, as an insult offered to religion. Instead therefore of representing to the emperor the impropriety of these exhibitions in such a place, and petitioning for their discontinuance, he employed his ordinary freedom and keenness of tongue in rebuking publicly those who tolerated them.<sup>121</sup>

Eudoxia called a synod, the Synod of Oak in 403, in which John was condemned for treason, deposed and exiled until his death. Even with the

---

<sup>118</sup> Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, translated by Henri de Valois (London: H.G. Bohn, 1853), 314. Holum, 54.

<sup>119</sup> Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen, Comprising a History of the Church From A.D. 324 to A.D. 440*, translated by Edward Walford, M.A. (London: Bohn’s Ecclesiastical Library, 1855), 509.

<sup>120</sup> Sozomen, 385.

<sup>121</sup> Socrates, 328.

intervention of Pope Innocent I on his behalf, the bishop did not enter Constantinople again.

It would seem that Eudoxia's religious devotion lent her influence greater than that of the highest Christian officials at the time. In addition, the empress had embraced the traditional image of fecundity by bearing Arcadius six children, but unfortunately suffered a fatal miscarriage in her seventh pregnancy in 404.<sup>122</sup> While Eudoxia provided stability for the Theodosian dynasty, and a more commanding portrayal for empresses, it was with her daughter Pulcheria (399-453) that the move away from fecundity, and the conceptualization of piety, can be seen more clearly.

Arcadius had not lived up to the glorious military legacy of his father Theodosius, and had become known as a hapless and ineffective ruler.<sup>123</sup> After Eudoxia's death, he all but retreated from imperial life, and allowed Anthemius, the Eastern *Praetorian Prefect*,<sup>124</sup> to govern the empire in his stead. When Arcadius died in 408, leaving three daughters and his seven-year-old son Theodosius II behind, it was Anthemius who became the boy's regent.

Theodosius' eldest sister, Pulcheria, made her piety known early on in Anthemius' rule, and according to the ecclesiastical historian Sozomen, the young girl made a public announcement of her and her sisters' vows of chastity:

---

<sup>122</sup> Holum, 77. Holum uses Socrates, 6.19.4-6 as his source for this.

<sup>123</sup> Alan Cameron and Jacqueline Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 138. Cameron and Long note that Synesius, the Greek Bishop of Ptolemais, criticizes Arcadius' lack of connection with his soldiers, while the poet Claudian praises the military ideal that Honorius, Arcadius' brother, seems to so easily uphold.

<sup>124</sup> Praetorian Prefecture, a high-ranking administrative post within the empire, which was the equivalent of chief minister to the emperor.

This princess was but fifteen years of age, but was endowed with astonishing wisdom and prudence. She devoted her virginity to God and instructed her sisters to do likewise...In confirmation of her resolution, she took God, the priests, and all the subjects of the Roman empire as witnesses of her self-dedication, and presented a table, elaborately adorned with gold and precious stones, to the church of Constantinople, in token of the life of virginity to which she and her sisters had devoted themselves...She superintended with extraordinary wisdom the transactions of the Roman government; concerted her measures well, and allowed no delay to take place in their execution.<sup>125</sup>

This declaration had special significance since it came at a time when Athemius was attempting to betroth his son to Pulcheria, and other suitors were clamouring for the princesses' hands, vying to secure the crown for themselves while Theodosius II was still young. The pronouncement of virginity, which was believed to have been the machinations of Pulcheria herself, rather than the influence of others, was doubly effective then, in that, since it was illegal and punishable by law to solicit marriage from a virgin who had invoked the vow of chastity,<sup>126</sup> these men would have no choice but to recant their offers. The Theodosian dynasty was safe for the time being. Conveniently, after Pulcheria made the vow, Anthemius disappeared from the sources, about which J.B Bury posits it was death that removed him,<sup>127</sup> while Kenneth Holum remarks that it is

---

<sup>125</sup> Sozomen, 405.

<sup>126</sup> In AD 364, a law made effective under emperor Jovian prescribed capital punishment for those who solicited marriage from virgins.

<sup>127</sup> John B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian, Volume I* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 214 "In her sixteenth year Pulcheria was created Augusta (July 4, A.D.414), and assumed the regency in the name of her brother, who was two years younger than herself. Anthemius soon disappeared from the scene; we may conjecture that death removed him."

just as plausible that it was Pulcheria who removed him.<sup>128</sup> Pulcheria's imperial images, as virgin empress and her brother's protector, moved representations of the imperial feminine toward a more commanding portrayal that transcended the emphasis on fecundity. Pulcheria's grandmother, Flaccilla, had already been the first empress to don the military garment, the *paludamentum*,<sup>129</sup> on her coinage, and the first to wear a diadem identical to that of the emperor. These kinds of innovations can be seen in one of Pulcheria's more imperious image, the Trier Ivory (fig.5).

On this object, preserved at the Trier Cathedral Museum in Trier, Germany, and dated to the late sixth or early seventh century, we see a representation of a contemporary re-working of the story of Helena's recovery of the True Cross. In this new Theodosian context, the relics of Saint Stephen processionally move towards the empress Pulcheria and not her brother Theodosius, who is instead facing her. Suzanne Spain observes that Theodosius is leading the procession, but it is to Pulcheria that the procession is leading.<sup>130</sup> Pulcheria is depicted as receiving the relics, and the eye moves easily to where

---

<sup>128</sup> Holum, 97. "The attitudes of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret close the circle, proving beyond reasonable doubt that Pulcheria's vow emerged from a threat to the independence of the dynasty...Anthemius himself is last attested April 18, 414. He may simply have died, but the context suggests that not long after her vow Pulcheria ordered a change of government."

<sup>129</sup> Lillian M. Wilson, *The Clothing of the Ancient Romans* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938), 101; 103. The *paludamentum* was a military garment where the material is fastened over the right shoulder. It was traditionally part of a Roman soldier's or general's uniform. In imperial fashion the garment was often fastened with a bejeweled fibular at the shoulder. Wilson notes that the *paludamentum* could also be understood as representing armour, but in the case of Agrippina, Pliny states that she wore a *paludamentum* woven from gold.

<sup>130</sup> Suzanne Spain, "Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol.31 (1977): 281-282, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1291409>. Suzanne writes: "The translation procession moves from left to right led by a figure in Byzantine imperial garb. The emperor wears a short tunic marked with pellets, a long chlamys fastened by a fibula, and a diadem with short double pendilia; he carries a large lit candle."

she stands holding a long cross, reaching out towards Theodosius II with her right hand. Behind Pulcheria is the church in which the relics would be housed, and where the workers on the roof are still doing work at her command.<sup>131</sup> Gary Vikan and Kenneth Holum date the actual event of the procession, or *adventus* ceremony, to 421, and treat it as a political move to celebrate imperial strength through the power of religious symbolism. Their idea is reinforced by mintings of imperial coinage bearing the Long-Cross *Solidi*.<sup>132</sup> On both Pulcheria's and Theodosius II's coins from 420-422, Victory is depicted standing on the reverse, holding the Long-Cross *Solidi*; however, it is Pulcheria only who appears on some coins bearing the disembodied hand of God placing the crown upon her head, while Theodosius is shown holding a spear (fig.6). These suggest a conceptualization of complementary imperial roles: the empress was fulfilling divine protector of the empire, while the emperor was protector of its physical realm.

Going back to the depiction of Pulcheria on the Trier Ivory, her imperial garb and that of Theodosius are quite similar. This innovation of imperial dress in representations of Byzantine empresses during the fifth century has been mentioned before. Pulcheria's grandmother then, had already appeared on

---

<sup>131</sup> Gabor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 60. Klaniczay writes "in 420, 'the blessed Pulcheria,' Aelia Eudoxia's daughter and Theodosius II's older sister...saw to the translation of the relics of St Stephen Protomartyr to the chapel she had built to house them at her palace in Chalcedon."

<sup>132</sup> Kenneth G. Holum and Gary Vikan, "The Trier Ivory, "Adventus" Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 33 (1979): 129, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1291435>. "In this reign victory depended less on the emperor's warlike qualities than on conciliation of the divine protector. The coinage attests the same victory ideology. Between 420 and early 422 the mint of Constantinople initiated a new victory type, the much-discussed Long-Cross *Solidi*."

coinage wearing the military garment, the *palumentum*, and Pulcheria herself wore this piece on her imperial coins as well. For Angelova, an examination of the ivories of Ariadne “were a product of the specific late Antique synthesis of Roman ideas of rulership with Christian ideology,”<sup>133</sup> in the context of which the collegial relationship of the emperor and empress takes centre stage as partners as the focus on fecundity now shifts towards a depiction of empresses in military garb laden with Christian symbols of power. At this point the emphasis on dynastic stability, while still important, was no longer playing such an obvious part in this conceptualization of the imperial feminine.

The mid-sixth century saw the rise of Theodora (500 – 548), who is perhaps the empress best known to the non-Byzantinist. It is fortuitous that her immaculate, sparkling mosaic still clings to the wall inside the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, while her legacy remains laden with the gossip and scandal that surrounded her rise to power. Apparently, Theodora caught the eyes of Justinian I while she was an exotic dancer and prostitute in Constantinople.<sup>134</sup> Justinian was set on having her as his wife, and so enacted legislation, by influencing his uncle emperor Justin to make it legal for him to marry her. The law now stated that any ex-actress that had been admitted to the patriciate could

---

<sup>133</sup> Angelova, 9.

<sup>134</sup> Prokopios, *The Secret History*, translated by Richard Atwater (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1927), 100. “But as soon as she arrived at the age of youth, and was now ready for the world, her mother put her on the stage. Forthwith, she became a courtesan, and such as the ancient Greeks used to call a common one, at that: for she was not a flute or harp player, nor was she even trained to dance, but only gave her youth to anyone she met, in utter abandonment.”

marry anyone they wished, since any personal history of the stage would be forgotten.<sup>135</sup> Theodora was given the status of patrician when she became Justinian's mistress, which then ensured that they could be legally wed; and so the couple married around 524, and when Justin died, they took the throne in 527.

The laws saw another flurry of revisions after Theodora and Justinian were married. We do not know whether Theodora was the instigator of such revisions, but the laws reflect a concern towards the women of the empire. Lynda Garland points out two significant changes to the laws which stipulate that in the case of a female Roman citizen being held due to a pending criminal charge, she must wait in either a convent, or protected by another female, in order to be defended from abuse or rape. Furthermore punishment was stipulated for those who were found to have been taking advantage of young girls by telling them they were held by a legal contract and coercing them into prostitution.<sup>136</sup> Malalas, a sixth century chronicler who lived in Constantinople during Theodora's reign, describes some of her efforts to protect young girls from sex work:

"The most religious Theodora to many other excellent deeds added this. There were keepers of brothel-houses, who went about, buying girls of the poorest people at a small price, and then prostituting them, even by violence, and living upon this abominable trade. She ordered them all to be taken up, and brought before her, with the girls whom they kept; she paid them the price which they

---

<sup>135</sup> Prokopios, 110. Prokopios writes: "It was then that he undertook to complete his marriage with Theodora. But as it was impossible for a man of senatorial rank to make a courtesan his wife, this being forbidden by ancient law, he made the emperor nullify this ordinance by creating a new one, permitting him to wed Theodora, and consequently making it possible for anyone else to marry a courtesan."

<sup>136</sup> Lynda Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium AD 527-1204* (London: Routledge, 1999), 16.

had given for their purchases, and delivered the unhappy creatures from this scandalous bondage, and having clothed them and given them necessities, she set them at liberty, and caused all such practices to be prohibited for the time to come.”<sup>137</sup>

Impressive reforms such as these however, are often overshadowed by the historical sources’ portrayals of Theodora as an empress with a seedier side.

Our most comprehensive source on Theodora, and our chief informant on her aberrant behavior is the historian Prokopios of Caesarea, secretary to Justinian’s chief military commander Belisarios. Prokopios’ text *The Secret History* primarily details what he describes as the empress Theodora’s shocking sexual exploits, bawdy behavior, and endless thirst for orgies;<sup>138</sup> at least this is what modern historians more commonly accentuate,<sup>139</sup> a point that Anthony Kaldellis makes in his 2010 translation of *The Secret History*.<sup>140</sup> However, Prokopios attacked Justinian with equal vigor, and while his text often crosses over to heated insult, Prokopios’ text exists as an important representation of some of the dissatisfaction present with the imperial couple’s administrative decisions.

---

<sup>137</sup> John Jortin, D.D., *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, Vol.II, (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1846), 152. Jortin quotes John Malalas.

<sup>138</sup> Prokopios, 101-102. “On the field of pleasure she was never defeated. Often she would go pinicking with ten young men or more, in the flower of their strength and virility, and dallied with them all, the whole night through. When they wearied of the sport, she would approach their servants, perhaps thirty in number, and fight a duel with each of these; and even thus found no allayment of her craving.”

<sup>139</sup> Thomas A.J. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 170. McGinn classifies Prokopios’ “demolition of the virtue of Theodora” as “politically motivated hostility.” John B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. II* (New York: Dover, 1958), 166. Bury writes that Prokopios’ narrative is “perfectly credible.” Barry Baldwin, “Sexual Rhetoric in Prokopios,” *Mnemosyne*, 40, (1987): 151, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4431609>. Baldwin comments, “the sex life of Theodora owes more to male fantasy and literary tradition than reality.”

<sup>140</sup> Prokopios, *The Secret History, with related texts*, edited and translated by Anthony Kaldellis (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), lii.

In his other two works, *The Buildings* and *The Wars*, Prokopios floridly praises Theodora for her piety and her firm hand in governance – attributes that are echoed in the works of John of Ephesus<sup>141</sup> and John Malalas.<sup>142</sup> Confusion may arise when we try to reconcile Prokopios' starkly different depictions of the empress: the one, flattering, the other, damning. One of the more prevalent conflicts during Theodora and Justinian's rule was that between the Chalcedonians and Monophysites.<sup>143</sup> Chalcedonian Christianity was the official state sponsored religion at this time; but the Monophysites made up a large part of the Roman population. Anthony Kaldellis points out that Prokopios expressed with disdain in *The Secret History* his belief that Theodora and Justinian had in fact, fooled the population into thinking that Justinian was an adherent of Chalcedonian Christianity while Theodora chose to represent the interests of the

---

<sup>141</sup> John Bishop of Ephesus, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History*, translated by R. Payne Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1860), 2. John writes of Theodora's strength in imperial matters: "For though Justinian had removed Theodosius from his see, yet he was received at court with so much distinction by Theodora, and so thoroughly supported by her influence, that his disgrace was turned into a triumph."

<sup>142</sup> John Malalas, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, translated by Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys and Roger Scott (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), 255-256. Malalas writes that Theodora ordered brothel-keepers arrested who took advantage of destitute young girls, making them into prostitutes. He also remarks that the empress would often pay pimps the money they bought the girls for, and took the girls into her care for a short while.

<sup>143</sup> In the fourth century AD, Monophysitism arose in reaction to Nestorianism, a reading of Christian dogma, which held that Christ was comprised of two separate and distinct persons, one divine and one human. Monophysitism held that Christ had only one nature, which was partly divine and partly human.

John Norman Davidson Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978), 331;339-340. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD declared these and all other forms of Christianity heresies, except for that which would be called Chalcedonian Christianity, the position that Christ in fact had two natures, one divine and one human, which exist united but not mixed in one person. While Chalcedonian Christianity became the official religion of the Byzantine Empire, over the centuries there remained a large population of Monophysites.

Monophysites.<sup>144</sup> It is evident that despite Prokopios' negative take on this policy, the imperial household was mirroring in the realm of the imperial household the religious accommodation sought on an empire-wide level.

Prokopios' misgivings about Theodora and Justinian's rule offer a critique that is aimed at the imperial couple, not just at the person of the empress. It should also be noted that *The Secret History*, the more overtly critical of Prokopios' works, was written after the deaths of both Justinian and Theodora. This suggests a fear of retaliation on Prokopios' part, were he to be found to be too disloyal to the regime. In *The Secret History*, and less openly in *The Buildings* and *The Wars*, both the feminine and masculine representations are being censured, reflecting the expectation that both these positions, as a partnership, were viewed as integral to the stability and prosperity of the empire.

The Nika riots were a violent revolt, which occurred in Constantinople in 532, during the imperial couple's reign. By the end of it some 30 000 people lay dead in the streets of the capital. Geoffrey Greatrex examines a number of causes for this week of mob violence and havoc, citing the massive population increase the city had seen, the previous series of smaller riots that had occurred between Green and Blue factions (chariot racing teams), and a discontent with the increased taxation Justinian had implemented.<sup>145</sup> In *The Wars*, Prokopios

---

<sup>144</sup> Prokopios, *The Secret History, with related texts*, edited and translated by Anthony Kaldellis (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), 145. Kaldellis writes: "At *Secret History* 10.14-15 (cf. 13.9, 14.8) Prokopios claims that Justinian and Theodora deliberately took opposite sides in the main religious controversy of the age, regarding the refusal by many Christian communities in the East to recognize the Council of Chalcedon (451)."

<sup>145</sup> Geoffrey Greatrex, "The Nika Riot: A Reappraisal," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 117 (1997): 60 (population); 62 (Green and Blue factions); 79 (taxes), <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/632550>.

gives an account of the empress' words at a time when Justinian's nerve was shaken "My opinion then is that the present time, above all others, is inopportune for flight, even though it bring safety ... . For one who has been an emperor it is unendurable to be a fugitive. May I never be separated from this purple ... . I approve a certain ancient saying that royalty is a good burial-shroud."<sup>146</sup> In this quote, Theodora is portrayed as the true force in the palace, shaming Justinian for the thought of fleeing, and for daring to forget his position as emperor. However, Leslie Brubaker reminds the reader to not forget Prokopios' use of rhetoric in his effort to portray the severity of the situation, and points to Menander Rhetor's insistence on the effectiveness of an invented speech.<sup>147</sup> Brubaker remarks that this is the only instance in *The Wars* that the reader ever witnesses Theodora open her mouth in speech, and so this event is significant. Coupled with Prokopios' skilled construction of the solemn air of empress' speech is the subsequent massacring of the revolting citizens by the emperor's order, who was now moved to act by the empress' words. Kaldellis sees this entire scene as a carefully constructed criticism by Prokopios of what he felt was the tyrannical and totalitarian nature of the couple's rule.<sup>148</sup>

---

<sup>146</sup> Prokopios, *History of the Wars, Books I & II*, translated by H.B. Dewing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 56.

<sup>147</sup> Leslie Brubaker, "The Age of Justinian: Gender and Society," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, edited by Michael Mass (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 429-430. Maas quotes Menander Rhetor, "If it is possible to invent, and to do this convincingly, do not hesitate." (Treatise 2.37.11-14 [83].

<sup>148</sup> Prokopios, *The Secret History, with related texts*, edited and translated by Anthony Kaldellis (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), xxi. Kaldellis comments that the "massacre of the Nika rioters and the suppression of dissidents...revealed the regime's ruthless authoritarian character."

Prokopios' depictions of Theodora, good or bad, portray her as powerful and commanding, despite her status as an upstart without affiliation to a previous dynasty. Theodora shows us that once a woman attained the status of empress, whether her origins were humble or noble, she was elevated to a place of power and privilege. Her imperial mosaic in the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, which faces an identical mosaic of Justinian, provides a cogent example of this position of power. In the artwork, Theodora is depicted as holding the communion chalice, which, Liz James points out, was an act that would usually be forbidden to women within the Orthodox tradition.<sup>149</sup> In addition, the way in which Theodora's mosaic faces that of Justinian could be understood as Theodora offering the chalice to the emperor, of which tradition only allowed the priest to drink from.<sup>150</sup> Going beyond Pulcheria's manipulation of the imperial image, and the increased representation of the divinity of the empress, Theodora assumes fully the power of the imperial feminine.

By 565, both Theodora and Justinian had died, and Theodora's niece Sophia (530 – 601) succeeded the throne with Justinian's nephew Justin II (520 – 578). Although the visual and material sources concerning Sophia are much

---

<sup>149</sup> Liz James, "Goddess, Whore, Wife or Slave?" in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference held at King's College London, April 1995*, edited by Anne Duggan (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), 132. James comments, "The empress carries the communion chalice. This is a startling depiction. Women in Orthodox worship could only participate in the lay parts of the liturgy – the responses, the creed and certain chants and prayers. Their chances of getting near the communion chalice, never mind holding it and processing with it, were non-existent."

<sup>150</sup> George P. Majeska, *Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Publications 1984), 433. Majeska notes that during emperor Manuel II's coronation, which came in the fourteenth century, the emperor took communion at the altar, "the emperor then drinks like a priest from the chalice held by the patriarch, rather than receiving the wine on a spoon with the bread as laymen do."

more abundant than those for Theodora,<sup>151</sup> Sophia has often been overshadowed in modern histories by scholars trumping up her aunt's perceived notoriety. After Sophia and Justin II were elevated to the throne, the couple ruled the empire as partners in every respect, which is reflected in the innovation their imperial coinage saw in its portrait type. The obverse side of their coins, particularly those of lower denomination, depicted the two rulers seated on a double throne, both holding the imperial scepter, suggesting the wide diffusion of the couple as collegial partners in the imperium.

The imperial couple was attributed to performing acts of philanthropy in concert, including the construction of an orphanage, a house for the care of those afflicted with leprosy, and the building and repair of churches across the empire.<sup>152</sup> The pair also had the task of rebuilding the imperial treasury after Justinian and Theodora had apparently exhausted it, about which Averil Cameron cites the writings of the ninth century chronicler Theophanes Confessor who stated that it was Sophia who initiated the repayment of forced loans from bankers and financiers, working with Justin to ensure these debts, their predecessors had incurred, were quickly repaid.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> Anne McClanan, *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 152. Anne McClanan notes, "[T]he scale of high-profile commissions named after Sophia was unprecedented."

<sup>152</sup> Lynda Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527 – 1204* (London: Routledge, 1999), 48. Garland notes both Theophanes the Confessor and Zonaras write of the imperial couple's work on constructing "a leper-house, orphanage, repair work on the great aqueduct of Valens and the construction of numerous churches."

<sup>153</sup> Averil Cameron, "The Empress Sophia," in *Continuity and Change in Sixth Century Byzantium* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), 9-10.

In addition to their reception as active partners through their coins and philanthropic acts, were the depictions in the sources of Sophia and Justin as reminiscent of imperial couples past. When Sophia requested that the relic of the Holy Cross be presented by the rulers to St. Raegund in Gaul in 568, the poet Venantius Fortunatus composed two hymns and a poem in which Justin was called the new Constantine, and Sophia, the new Helena:

May the highest glory be to You, Creator and Redeemer of the world, who in your justice establish Justin on high...May the highest glory be to You, Creator and Redeemer of the world, because noble Sophia holds august rank...Behold Augustus, you rival each other with like offerings; you ennoble your sex, as he does his; the man brings back Constantine, the godly woman Helena.<sup>154</sup>

In a theme that harkens back to Livia and Augustus' harmonious household, the panegyric of the court rhetoric Corippus recreates a domestic scene, just before Justinian's death brought the two to the throne:

Here it was that the chosen emperor had risen from the soft bedcovers and was sitting in a remote corner telling his beloved wife what had been revealed to him. While he was speaking and turning over his anxiety with his pious wife, the senators entered the threshold with gloomy faces. Their appearance showed the state of affairs with the utmost clarity.<sup>155</sup>

By tapping into the imperial legacy previous dynasties, Sophia and Justin appear to rise above the discontent of Theodora and Justinian's rule, where the literary

---

<sup>154</sup> Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus, *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems*, translated by Judith George (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 114.

<sup>155</sup> Corippus, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris*, 1.108-17, quoted in Anne L. McClanan, *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 150.

Horace. *Carmen*, 3.6. Quoted in Zanker, Paul. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. Translated by Alan Shapiro. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1988.

and visual sources depict these two as signifying the peace and stability of the empire.

Nevertheless, the religious affiliations of Sophia and Justin were still a hot topic. John of Ephesus ascribes Sophia as Monophysite, stating that her conversion to Chalcedonianism in 562 was not sincere;<sup>156</sup> however, Anne McClanan points out this may have been “wishful thinking” on the part of the Monophysite John, since Sophia seemed to have had a particular zeal for the later persecution of Monophysites.<sup>157</sup> However, Lynda Garland asserts that the couple actually had the unity of the church as their utmost priority, and cites Justin’s run of conferences comprised of various Monophysite and Chalcedonian leaders in the second half of 566 as an indication of their earnestness in this cause.<sup>158</sup>

John of Ephesus describes the actions of the imperial couple after the persecutions began, including the imprisonment of Monophysite men and women in monasteries: “The following day the king (Justin) visited the monasteries in person; and the next day the queen (Sophia) in like manner, offering each of them gifts, and restoring such monks as either had, or were ready to make their submission.”<sup>159</sup> While John gives us a picture of the imperial couple working in concert, he also describes Justin’s descent into madness in the winter of 573-

---

<sup>156</sup> John Bishop of Ephesus, 106. John writes that although Sophia was a Monophysite from childhood, “the conversion of Sophia to the communion of the two natures was brought about in the following way...” and states that the empress transferred her support to the Chalcedonians in order to facilitate her husband’s accession.

<sup>157</sup> McClanan, 151.

<sup>158</sup> Garland, 46.

<sup>159</sup> John Bishop of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 9.

574<sup>160</sup> and the various levels of insanity the emperor devolved into over a period of five years.<sup>161</sup> After Justin became incapacitated, Sophia operated as sole ruler of the empire, and appointed Tiberius, Commander of the Excubitors, as Justin's heir. It is in this period, where the empress acted as sole ruler that this thesis will come to an end, and posit some considerations of the imperial feminine and masculine.

Anne McClanan posits that an ivory, almost identical to one of Ariadne's discussed in Diliانا Angelova's article, was that of the empress Sophia, possibly during her time as sole ruler, before an heir to the throne was appointed (fig.7).<sup>162</sup> In both these images, Ariadne and Sophia, who, following the deaths of their husbands, both ruled the empire alone until they could appoint new heirs to the male throne, are depicted with all the trappings of imperial garb. While it is arguable that these representations have been constructed in a way that incorporates both masculine and feminine imperial attributes (the scepter, the *globus cruciger*, the *palumentum*, the canopied throne), we have seen that attributes of command had already been incorporated into representations of the empress. Significantly though, is the idea that, if there were no emperor on the throne, the empress *could* take on both these roles. It was not that the empress

---

<sup>160</sup> Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach, "Justin's Madness: Weak-Mindedness or Organic Psychosis?" *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 48, vo.1 (1993): 40, <http://jhmas.oxfordjournals.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/content/48/1/40>.

<sup>161</sup> John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 167. John writes: "For suddenly it destroyed his reason, and his mind was agitated and darkened...and his attendants, in spite of their respect for him as king, had to run after him, and lay hold of him, to prevent him from dashing himself down and being killed; and the queen was obliged to give orders for carpenters to come, and fix bars on the windows."

<sup>162</sup> McClanan, 170; Angelova, 10. Angelova asserts: "The so-called ivories of Ariadne were a product of the specific late Antique synthesis of Roman ideas of rulership with Christian ideology."

was finally gaining a chance to play at legitimate masculine power, since we have seen throughout this thesis that an empress already had a position of power that included active participation in the political realm, and it is easy to see how, were the occasion to arise, she could manifest both the masculine and feminine attributes of imperial rule, due to the fact that she was already a crucial half of the imperial couple.

## CONCLUSION

Covering the rise of the imperial family as a governing body in the early Roman empire, to the adoption of military dress in the fifth and sixth centuries of the Byzantine period, the preceding pages of this thesis has offered a cursory look at the various representations and conceptualizations of the position of the early Byzantine empress, and its origins in the early Roman empire. Rather than insisting on a fixed definition of what constituted the role and power of this imperial position, this thesis sought to touch upon and explore the variety of ways in which the empress exercised her political power.

The conceptualizations of the imperial feminine in particular saw the empress as representing a range of ideals, such as fecundity, religious virtue, divine military victory, and philanthropy. The empress therefore existed as an active participant in the politics of the empire, and as an essential half of an imperial partnership that, reciprocally, lent legitimacy and stability to the empire's monarchy. Those empresses examined here were by no means the only female figures that were prominent or exercised power during the time frame of this thesis. Empresses such as the ninth century Irene, and the eleventh century empresses Zoe and Theodora were touched upon in the literary survey of this thesis, and represent only a fraction of the continued power and changing conceptualizations of empresses throughout the remaining centuries of the Byzantine Empire. A wealth of additional literary and visual sources exist to

expand our understanding of the nature of the relationship between the position of empress and emperor throughout the Roman and Byzantine period. The examples provided, however, demonstrate that using gender as a question of historical analysis can allow for an expanded understanding of the ways in which imperial feminine and masculine power was understood in its own period. It is imperative that this period not be viewed through the lens of latter-day western understandings of gender relationships. With these considerations in mind, the empress can be incorporated back into the historical narrative, ultimately leading towards a more complete, and accurate, history of the Roman and Byzantine Empire.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

Augustus. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. Translated by P.A. Brunt and J.M. Moore. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Corippus, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris*, 1.108-17. Quoted in McClanan, Anne L. *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Dio, Cassius. *Dio's Rome, Vol. 4, An Historical Narrative Originally Composed in Greek During the Reigns of Septimus Severus, Geta and Caracalla, Macrinus, Elagabalus and Alexander Severus: And Now Presented in English Form*. Produced by Ted Garvin, and Jayam Subramanian (January, 2004) [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10883](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10883).

Eusebius. *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine, from AD 306 to AD 337*. New Jersey: Evolution Publishing, 2009.

Horace. *Carmen*, 3.6. Quoted in Zanker, Paul. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. Translated by Alan Shapiro. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1988.

John, Bishop of Ephesus. *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History*. Translated by R. Payne Smith. London: Oxford University Press, 1860.

Malalas, John. *The Chronicle of John Malalas*. Translated by Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys and Roger Scott. Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Translated by Charles Martin. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Ovid. *Fasti*. Translated by Betty Rose Nagle. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

Philostrorgius. *The Ecclesiastical History of Philostrorgius*. Translated by Edward Walford. London: Bohn's Ecclesiastical Library, 1855.

Plutarch. *The History of Julius Caesar. Newly Translated from the Original Greek of Plutarch: A Translation of a Selection from Plutarch's 'Vitae Parallelae.'* Eighteenth Century Collections Online, (London, 1771): 157-158, [http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW103669267&source=gale&userGroupName=sfu\\_z39&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE](http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CW103669267&source=gale&userGroupName=sfu_z39&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE).

Prokopios. *History of the Wars, Books I and II*. Translated by H.B. Dewing. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914.

Prokopios. *The Secret History, with related texts*. Edited and translated by Anthony Kaldellis. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010.

Prokopios. *The Secret History*. Translated by Richard Atwater. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1927.

Psellus, Michael. *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus*. Translated by E.R.A. Sewter. London: Penguin Books, 1966.

Socrates. *Ecclesiastical History*. Translated by Henri de Valois. London: H.G. Bohn, 1853.

Sozomen. *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen, Comprising a History of the Church From A.D. 324 to A.D. 440*. Translated by Edward Walford, M.A. London: Bohn's Ecclesiastical Library, 1855.

Seutonius. "Augustus." In *Twelve Caesars*. Translated by Robert Graves, 47-99. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979.

Tacitus, Cornelius. "The Annals." In *The Annals and the Histories*. Edited by Moses Hadas. Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, 3-343. New York: Modern Library, 1942; 2003.

Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus. *Ecclesiastical History: A History of the Church in Five Books, from A.D. 322 to the Death of Theodore of Mopsuestia A.D. 427*. London: S. Bagster, 1843.

Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus. *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems*. Translated by Judith George. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995.

Zonaras, Joannes. *The History of Zonaras: From Alexander Severus to the Death of Theodosius*. Translated by Thomas M. Banchich and Eugene N. Lane. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Zosimus. *New History*. Translated by Ronald T. Ridley. Canberra:  
Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982.

## Secondary Sources

Angelova, Diliانا. "The Ivories of Ariadne and Ideas about Female Imperial Authority in Rome and Early Byzantium." *Gesta* 43, no.1 (2004): 1-15.

Ballance, Michael. "Derbe and Faustinopolis," *Anatolian Studies* 14 (1964): 139-145. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/3642469>

Baldwin, Barry. "Suetonius: Birth, Disgrace and Death," *Acta Classica* 18 (1975): 61-70.

Baldwin, Barry. "Sexual Rhetoric in Procopius." *Mnemosyne* 40 (1987): 150-152. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4431609>

Barnes, Timothy David. *Constantine and Eusebius*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Barrett, Anthony A. *Agrippina: Sister of Caligula, Wife of Claudius, Mother of Nero*. London: B.T. Batsford, 1996.

Beacham, Richard. "The Emperor as Impresario: Producing the Pageantry of Power." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, edited by Karl Galinsky, 151-174. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Beard, Mary, John A. North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Benario, H.W. "Julia Domna – Mater Senatus et Patriae," *Phoenix* 12, no.2 (Summer, 1958): 67-70. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1086523>.

Bird, H.W. *Sextus Aurelius Victor: A Historiographical Study*. Liverpool:

Francis Cairns, 1984.

Boatwright, Mary T. *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Boydston, Jeanne. "Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis." *Gender & History* 20, no. 3 (November 2008): 558-583.

Brown, Elsa Barkley. "African-American Women's Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women's History." *Signs* 14, no. 4 (Summer, 1989): 921-929.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/3174693>

Brubaker, Leslie and Helen Tobler, "The Gender of Money," *Gender & History* 3, vol.12 (November 2000): 572-594.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/doi/10.1111/1468-0424.00201>

Bury, J.B. *History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. I & II*. New York: Dover, 1958.

Cameron, Averil. *Images of Women in Antiquity*. London: Croom Helm, 1983.

Cameron, Averil. *Continuity and Change in Sixth Century Byzantium* London: Variorum Reprints, 1981.

Cameron, Averil. "Sacred and Profane Love: Thoughts on Byzantine Gender." In *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, edited by Liz James, 1-23. London: Routledge, 1997.

Cameron, Averil. "Early Christianity and the Discourse of Female Desire." In *Women in Ancient Societies. An Illusion of the Night*, edited by L.J. Archer, Susan Fischler and M. Wyke, 152-68. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994.

Cameron, Averil. "Virginity as Metaphor: Women and the Rhetoric of Early Christianity." In *History as Text, The Writing of Ancient History*, edited by Averil Cameron, 181-205. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1990.

Cameron, Averil. "Neither Male nor Female." *Greece and Rome* 27 (September 2009): 60-68.

Clark, Gillian. "Do Try This At Home: The Domestic Philosopher in Late Antiquity." In *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, edited by Hagit and Bas ter Haar Romeny, 153-172. Belgium: Peeters, 2007.

Drijvers, Jan Willem. "Flavia Maxima Fausta: Some Remarks," *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geshichte*, vol. 4 (1992): 500-506.  
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4436264>.

Drijvers, Jan Willem. *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of her Finding the True Cross*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992.

Fagan, Garrett G. "Messalina's Folly." *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series 52, no.2 (2002): 566-579. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/3556420>.

Feeney, Denis. *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts, and Beliefs*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1988.

Flory, Marleen B. "The Symbolism of Laurel in Cameo Portraits of Livia."

*Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, vol.40 (1995): 43-68.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4238728>.

Flory, Marleen Boudreau. "Sic Exempla Parantur: Livia's Shrine to Concordia and the Porticus Liviae." *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte* 33, no.3 (3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr., 1984), 309-330.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4435892>.

Gardner, Jane F. *Women in Roman Law and Society*. London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986.

Garland, Lynda. *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, 527 – 1204 AD*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Gorrie, Charmaine. "Julia Domna's Building Patronage, Imperial Family Roles and the Severan Revival of Moral Legislation." *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte* 53, no.1 (2004): 61-72.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4436715>.

Greatrex, Geoffrey. "The Nika Riot: A Reappraisal," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol.117 (1997): 60-86.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/632550>.

Grether, Gertrude. "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult." *The American Journal of Philology* 67, no.3 (1946): 222-252.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/291543>.

Grubbs, Judith Evans. *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce, and Widowhood*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Herrin, Judith. "In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach." In *Images of Women in Antiquity*, edited by Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt, 167-190. London: Routledge, 1993.

Herrin, Judith. *Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001.

Hill, Barbara. *Imperial Women in Byzantium, 1025 – 1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology*. London: Longman, 1999.

Hill, Barbara. "Imperial Women and the Ideology of Womanhood in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries." In *Women, Men, and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, edited by Liz James, 76-99. London: Routledge, 1997.

Holum, Kenneth G. "Hadrian and St. Helena: Imperial Travel and the Origins of Christian Holy Land Pilgrimage." In *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, edited by Robert G. Ousterhout, 66-81. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Holum, Kenneth G. *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

Holum, Kenneth G. and Gary Vikan. "The Trier Ivory, "Adventus" Ceremonial, and the Relics of St. Stephen." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 33 (1979): 113-133. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1291435>.

Humphries, Mark. "From Usurper to Emperor: The Politics of Legitimation in the Age of Constantine," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no.1 (Spring 2008): 82-100. [http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/journals/journal\\_of\\_late\\_antiquity/v001/1.1.humphries.html](http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/journals/journal_of_late_antiquity/v001/1.1.humphries.html).

James, Liz. *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium*. London: Leicester University Press, 2001.

James, Liz and Barbara Hill. "Zoe. The Rhythm Method of Imperial Renewal." In *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal In Byzantium, 4<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Papers from the Twenty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. Andrews, March 1992*, edited by Paul Magdalino, 215-230. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994.

James, Liz and Barbara Hill. "Women and Politics in the Byzantine Empire: Imperial Women." In *Women in Medieval European Culture*, edited by Linda E. Mitchell, 157-178. New York: Garland Publishing, 1999.

James, Liz. "Goddess, Whore, Wife or Slave?" *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference held at King's College London, April 1995*, edited by Anne Duggan, 123-40. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997.

Jenkins, Romilly. *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries (AD 610 – 1071)*. New York: Random House, 1966.

Jortin, John, D.D. *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, Vol.II*. London: Bradbury and Evans, 1846.

Kaldellis, Anthony. *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Kampen, Natalie Boymel. "Between Public and Private: Women as

Historical Subjects in Roman Art.” In *Women’s History & Ancient History*, edited by Sarah B. Pomeroy, 218-248. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

Kelly, John Norman Davidson. *Early Christian Doctrines*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978.

King, Richard Jackson. *Desiring Rome: Male Subjectivity and Reading Ovid’s Fasti*. Chicago: Ohio State University, 2006.

Klaniczay, Gabor. *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Kroll, Jerome and Bernard Bachrach, “Justin’s Madness: Weak-Mindedness or Organic Psychosis?” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 48, vo.1 (1993): 40-67.

<http://jhmas.oxfordjournals.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/content/48/1/40>.

Kroppenberg, Inge. “Law, Religion, and Constitution of the Vestal Virgins”, *Law & Literature* 22, no.3 (Fall 2010) 418-439,  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/lal.2010.22.3.418>.

Laiou, Angeliki E. “Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women.” *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985): 59-102.

Laiou, Angeliki E. “Women in Byzantine Society.” In *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, edited by Linda E. Mitchell, 81-94. New York: Garland Publishing, 1999.

Laiou, Angeliki E. "Women in the Marketplace of Constantinople, 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries." In *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, edited by Nevra Necipoğlu, 111-122. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Laiou, Angeliki E. "Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women; The Festival of 'Agathe': Comments on the Life of Constantinopolitan Women." *Byzantion* 1 (1986): 280-298.

Lerner, Gerda. *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979.

Mattingly, Harold. "The Consecration of Faustina the Elder and Her Daughter." *The Harvard Theological Review* 41, no.2 (April 1948): 147-151.  
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1508088>.

McClanan, Anne L. *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

McGinn, Thomas A.J. *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Ostrogorsky, George. *History of the Byzantine State*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1957.

*Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium e-reference edition*, s.v. "Empress," by Michael McCormick, accessed October 14, 2008, <http://www.oxford-byzantium.com.proxy.ib.sfu.ca/>.

Oyewumi, Oyeronke. "Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects." In *African Gender Studies: A Reader*, edited by Oyeronke Oyewumi, 3-21. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Parker, Holt T. "Women Doctors in Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire." In *Women Healers and Physicians, Climbing a Long Hill*, edited by Lilian R. Furst, 131-150. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997.

Parr, Joy. "Gender History and Historical Practice." *Canadian Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (September 1995): 354-376.  
<http://proxy.lib.sfu.ca/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/pqdweb?did=6832508&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=3667&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.

Pollock, Frederick. "Marcus Aurelius and the Stoic Philosophy," *Mind*, 4, No. 13 (January 1879): 47-68. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/2246564>.

Pollitt, Jerome Jordan. *Art in the Hellenistic Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Runciman, Steven. *Byzantine Civilisation*. University of Michigan: Meridian Books, 1956.

Sanders, Henry A. "Suetonius in the Civil Service under Hadrian." *The American Journal of Philology* 65, no.2 (1944), 113-123.  
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/290993>.

Schonbeck, Hans-Peter. "Augustus als "Pater Patriae" und "Pater Familias" im Zweiten Tristienbuch des Ovid," *Hermes* 126, no.4 (1998), 454-465.  
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4477274>.

Scott, Joan W. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053-1075.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1864376>.

Scott, Joan W. *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Severy, Beth. *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Shapiro, Ann-Louise. "Introduction: History and Feminist Theory, or Talking Back to the Beadle," Talking Back to the Beadle" *History and Theory, Beiheft* 31, No. 4, 1-14.

Simpson, C.J. "Livia and the Constitution of the Aedes Concordiae. The Evidence of Ovid Fasti I.637ff.," *Historia: Zeitschrift fur Alte Geshichte* 40, no.4 (1991), 449-455. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/4436213>.

Spain, Suzanne. "Translation of Relics Ivory, Trier," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol.31 (1977): 279-304.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/1291409>.

Sumi, Geoffrey S. *Ceremony and Power: Performing Politics in Rome between Republic and Empire*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005.

Talbot, Alice-Mary, ed. *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998.

Talbot, Alice-Mary, ed. *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996.

Taylor, George. *Antinous: A Romance of Ancient Rome*. Translated by Mary Safford. New York: William S. Gottsberger, 1882.

Thomas, John Philip, Angela Constantinides Hero, and Giles Constable. *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents, Vol. 1 Dumbarton Oaks Studies XXXV*. Dumbarton Oaks: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Treadgold, Warren. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. California: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Weber, Max. *Economy and Society*. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1909; 1978.

Williams, Stephen and Gerard Friell. *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay*. London: B.T. Batsford, 1994.

Wood, Susan. "Too-Successful *Damnatio Memoriae*: Problems in Third Century Roman Portraiture," *American Journal of Archaeology* 87, no.4 (October 1983): 489-496. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/504107>.

Woods, David. "On the Death of the Empress Fausta," *Greece & Rome*, Second Series 45, no.1 (April 1998): 70-86. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/stable/643208>.