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Embodying the Empire: Imperial Women and the Evolution of Succession Ideologies in the Third Century

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Embodying the Empire: Imperial Women and the Evolution
of Succession Ideologies in the Third Century

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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It is quite an understatement to say that it takes a village to write a dissertation. This was written during a global pandemic, civic unrest, and personal upheavals. However, to quote a dear friend, “non bellum, sed completum est.” I could not have ventured into and finished such a monumental undertaking, and at such a time, without my very own village.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces the creation and negotiation of dynastic succession ideologies between the emperors and their subject populations between 193 and 313 CE, particularly through the advertisement of imperial women. Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa, and Galeria Valeria occupy watersheds in the evolution of third century dynastic succession ideologies. The administrations of each emperor crafted propaganda designed to elicit support for their reigns and dynastic ambitions, each tailored to appeal to a particular audience. Images of the empresses in official media were carefully constructed to elicit a population's support for the emperor's legitimacy. Subjects responded to these messages, seeking to have a meaningful relationship with the emperor. They engaged with the emperor by echoing, ignoring, or amplifying the imperial administration's portrait of the empress. Cities, provincial governors, military units, and local magistrates were among the populations that responded to imperial propaganda by erecting inscriptions in honor of the emperor and his family, and sometimes of the empresses alone.

This dissertation reconstructs the official images of Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa, and Galeria Valeria to determine their role in dynastic propaganda and examines the responses to it, particularly in the epigraphic record. Inscriptions erected by men represented a broad swath of the empire's populations. To detect women's responses to the empress and dynastic propaganda, I also consider inscriptions erected by women and less conventional artifacts such as dolls, cameos, and jewelry. Imperial propaganda and responses to it reveal how a variety of diverse groups employed the empresses' images to create a sense of citizenship in the empire.

INTRODUCTION

In a very real sense, empresses embodied the Roman Empire. Ancient authors employed their bodies as metaphors for the empire and images of empresses served the dynastic needs of the emperor (*HA Marc.* 19.9; *Hdn.* 4.3.8-9).¹ In dynastic ideology, an empress' lineage solidified her husband's reign by connecting him to his predecessors. Her *pudicitia* or sexual continence served as a guarantor of her sons' legitimacy. From the late second to the early fourth century, however, the actual and metaphorical motherhood of empresses played an important role in the prosperity and stability of the empire. Emperors employed the empress' body and maternity to claim familial like relationships between the imperial *domus* and subject populations such as the military and the Senate. Employing the metaphorical motherhood titles of the empresses gave subjects a sense of belonging to something much greater than themselves.

This dissertation explores the roles that Septimius Severus (fl. 193-211), Philip the Arab (245-249), and Galerius (305-311) assigned their wives in dynastic propaganda through an examination of official media, particularly imperial coin types and legends.² It also offers an analysis of subject responses to dynastic propaganda through the use of the empress' titles and images in epigraphic and material evidence. Beginning with Antoninus Pius (143-161), imperial women gained prominence in imperial coinage. Pius advertised key moments in the life of his daughter Faustina the Younger, especially her marriage and scenes of the empress nursing or

¹ I discuss these passages in greater detail in Chapter One. Susan Wood, *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images, 40 BC-AD 68* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1-2.

² I will define propaganda, advertisement, official, and unofficial celebrations below in Theoretical Foundations.

playing with her children. At the same time, her reverse types associated Faustina with maternal deities, virtues, and metaphors.³ The intimate family scenes depicted on coinage invited subjects to become emotionally invested in the imperial family. Related to these depictions was the unprecedented title that Marcus Aurelius bestowed on his wife, Mater Castrorum (c. 175).⁴ The title hinted at the filial loyalty the soldiers might offer the empress: a guarantee that her child would succeed his father peacefully thanks to the backing of the military. Septimius Severus echoed the dynastic propaganda that characterized Faustina the Younger in the advertisement of his wife, Julia Domna (fl. 193-217). Upon his death in 211, the empress was awarded even more elaborate and far-reaching titles: Mater Senatus (Mother of the Senate) and Mater Patriae (Mother of the Fatherland). These were likely awarded by the Senate and represent another response to dynastic propaganda.

Emperors ceased using these metaphorical motherhood titles in dynastic propaganda after the brutal murder of the Severan empress Julia Mamaea at the hands of the troops (d. 235). Nonetheless, subjects continued to assign the titles in dedicatory and honorific inscriptions to third century empresses like Otacilia Severa (fl. 244-249), whose husband sought to establish a dynasty. They also assigned it to Galeria Valeria (fl. 308-311), wife of Galerius and daughter of Diocletian. As a closed brotherhood of rulers, Diocletian's Tetrarchy decreased the prominence and influence of imperial women considerably during the first generation of rulers. Nonetheless, Galerius awarded his wife the Augusta title at the Council of Carnuntum in 308 and he and his fellow rulers, Licinius and Maximinus Daia each celebrated her on coinage from their respective mints. Subjects awarded Galeria Valeria the Mater Castrorum title as well. After her husband's

³ Klaus Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina Minor und die fecunditas Augustae* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982). Please note that because of the pandemic I was unable to lay my hands on a hard copy of Fittschen to supply page numbers.

⁴ I will discuss the evidence for the title in greater detail in Chapter One.

death, the widow posed both advantages and threats to her husbands' successors. She spurned a marriage offer from Mamiminus Daia and fled Licinus, perhaps for the same reason. Licinius tracked her down and had her brutally executed in 313.

Literary sources from this period concerned themselves primarily with political and military affairs, and little wonder. Romans living during the third century were plagued by barbarian invasions and political instability. Definitions of what it meant to be a Roman were turned upside down when Caracalla extended citizenship to all freeborn individuals in 212 CE. Christianity and other mystery religions challenged the dominance of imperial and local cults.⁵ Scholarship follows the outlines of ancient literary sources, largely interested in political and religious transformation, while studies of imperial women are sparse.⁶ Because of the scanty and unreliable nature of literary sources for this period, some scholars have turned to quantitative analysis of numismatic evidence in order to flesh out the historical narrative.⁷ Coinage is the best evidence for imperial women of the period, particularly for reconstructing imperial propaganda.⁸

The nearly constant civil war throughout the third century gave rise to the “soldier emperors,” who ascended to the throne most commonly through battlefield victories. Under these emperors, the images of the empresses, if they appear in dynastic propaganda are limited to making clear the relationship between the emperor and his sons. Intimate family scenes and

⁵ Clifford Ando, *Imperial Rome AD 193 to 284: The Critical Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 1-2.

⁶ Studies for Julia Domna are far more numerous while there is virtually nothing on Otacilia Severa or Galeria Valeria. The bibliographies for each empress will be discussed below and in the chapters that follow.

⁷ Quantitative numismatic studies include Carlos Noreña, “The Communication of the Emperor’s Virtues,” in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 91 (2001): 146-168; Erika Manders, *Coining Images of Power: Patterns in the Representation of Roman Emperors on Imperial Coinage, A.D. 193-284* (Leiden: BRILL, 2012); Clare Rowan, *Under Divine Auspices: Divine Ideology and the Visualisation of Imperial Power in the Severan Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Julie Langford, *Maternal Megalomania: Julia Domna and the Imperial Politics of Motherhood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

⁸ For more information, see Fittschen 1984; Lusnia 1990; Rowan 2011; Langford 2013. I discuss Lusnia and Rowan later in the “Historiography of Imperial Women” section on page 20.

metaphorical motherhood virtually disappeared from dynastic propaganda. Nevertheless, subject populations continued to employ the *Mater Castrorum*, *Mater Senatus*, and *Mater Patriae* titles in dedicatory and honorific inscriptions. The application of these titles were premediated and deliberate responses to imperial propaganda. Subject dedicants awarded the unofficial titles only to empresses whose husbands had dynastic ambitions, which seems to suggest that subjects recognized a link between the titles and dynastic succession. These celebrations constitute responses to dynastic propaganda, an acknowledgment of the emperors' ambitions with an apparent request for the kind of unity that the titles seem to guarantee. They express a longing for the stability that the titles offered, even when the imperial house no longer used these.

Women also responded to dynastic propaganda and in a variety of ways. Some wealthy women mimicked the empresses' euergetism or civic munificence. Their benefactions to their communities served to elevate themselves and their families by association. Other women imitated the empress' hairstyle or ornamentation thus communicating specific messages concerning the wearer. Images of the empresses appear on personal items likely owned by women. I explore what such items communicated about their owners and their (possible) attitudes towards dynastic propaganda.

Theoretical Foundation

In this dissertation, I examine the carefully constructed images of Julia Domna (wife of Septimius Severus), Otacilia Severa (wife of Philip the Arab), and Galeria Valeria (daughter of Diocletian and wife of Galerius) in dynastic propaganda as well as responses to these images by

subject populations. These empresses represent watershed moments in the evolution of third century succession ideologies.⁹

Fundamental for this study is Clifford Ando's *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Ando attributes the longevity of the Roman Empire to the creation of individualized ideologies negotiated between the emperor and specific audiences through dialogues and conversations.¹⁰ I adopt Ando's definition of propaganda, in which he defines as the systematic proliferation of materials and messages disseminated by the emperor, or individuals within the administration that support the emperor.¹¹ When I use the term "propaganda" I do not mean to imply that the statement is necessarily true or false, only that the information is curated to make the emperor look his very best. Ideology, as Ando defines it, is the agreed-upon narratives about the past, present, and future, specifically the role the emperor and his dynastic plans play in that narrative. Ideologies are negotiated from the conversations and dialogues between the emperor and his subjects. These narratives then inform social and cultural attitudes. Ideologies can vary significantly from one relationship to another (e.g. between the emperor-Senate and emperor-military). I define "advertisement" as the distribution of curated messages from the imperial house that are targeted to particular audiences. I am not implying that these messages are true or false, but simply that it is being propagated. I use the term "official" to describe the titles that the imperial house uses in its own messages, conveyed either through imperial coinage or inscriptions erected by the imperial house. "Unofficial" celebrations are those erected by subjects.

⁹ See below under "Competing Succession Ideologies" for further details.

¹⁰ Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 6.

¹¹ Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 132.

Ideologies can vary significantly from one relationship to another (e.g. between the emperor-Senate and emperor-military). Ando explores interactions between the imperial administration and subject populations, suggesting that the imperial administration strengthened its relationships with its subjects through a unifying message of inclusivity. When an emperor sent news and messages about military victories, or imperial births and marriages, he and his family became real and relevant to his subjects, even in far flung places of the empire he may never visit. Such messages built relationships between the emperor and a community, flattering them and winning their loyalty. Provincial cities often responded to these messages by expressing their gratitude in the form of *aurum coronarium* (gold crowns, but also money), monuments, inscriptions, and other forms of commemoration.¹² The imperial court viewed crowns as taxes but treated them as voluntary gifts that the emperor used for funding military campaigns.¹³ In the process of communication, both parties negotiated agreed-upon truths concerning the past, the present, and the future particularly with respect to the emperor's legitimacy and his dynastic ambitions.¹⁴

Julie Langford adopted Ando's approach to analyze the role of Julia Domna in the negotiation of dynastic ideologies between Septimius Severus and the military, the Roman *populus*, and the Senate.¹⁵ Langford found that Severus adopted the same strategies for Julia Domna as Marcus had for Faustina's advertisement: family metaphor, advertisements of intimate family moments, and the Mater Castrorum title. She analyzed the history of the title by surveying the literary sources beside numismatic evidence and suggested that the title was likely an

¹² Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 176; Julie Langford, *Maternal Megalomania: Julia Domna and the Imperial Politics of Motherhood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 36.

¹³ Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 176-7.

¹⁴ Ando, *Imperial Rome*, 7-8.

¹⁵ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 5.

invention of Marcus Aurelius and awarded in response to the revolt of Avidius Cassius. She found no epigraphic evidence for the title nor any of Faustina's Mater Castrorum coins in military zone hoards. Langford demonstrated that Severus employed the Mater Castrorum title precisely the same way as Marcus Aurelius. The Mater Castrorum title was neither marketed to the military, nor did soldiers respond to it until late in Severus' reign. Instead, it was civilian subjects who echoed the title early and often. Langford also explored the maternal imagery of Domna in coinage, deeming Severus' ever more superlative claims about Domna as "maternal megalomania." The associations and assimilations of the empress to maternal deities and virtues like Pietas, Cybele, and Concordia were insufficient to diffuse the well-known acrimony between her sons Caracalla and Geta. Langford claims that the most extreme of Domna's titles, Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae, were awarded to the empress early in 211, shortly after she and her sons returned to Rome. She interpreted the titles as an act of capitulation by the Senate, its abandonment of its preferred adopted succession model and a plea to keep the peace between her sons and thus save the Empire from civil war.

This dissertation builds off Ando's models for the negotiation of ideology and Langford's examination of the role of imperial women in negotiating dynastic ideology with subject populations. This dissertation uses the work that Langford and I collaborated on, especially Chapters One and Two that rely exclusively on the coin and inscription databases. What sets this dissertation apart from mine and Langford's project is that I examine the metaphorical motherhood titles beyond the Mater Castrorum. I consider how the additional titles were employed and by whom. Uniquely, however, "Embodying the Empire" is more inclusive of subject responses by examining women's objects exclusively in the final chapter.

I intend to place official media in the form of imperial coinage and inscriptions featuring Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa, and Galeria Valeria into conversation with responses to dynastic propaganda found in dedicatory and honorific inscriptions erected by subject populations. I will reexamine Julia Domna's images in dynastic propaganda before and after the death of Severus and place these beside epigraphic responses from civic and military populations. I will also consider how and why the advertisement of empresses in official media changed over the course of the third century and how subjects continued to link the empress with imperial succession and legitimacy even through the second generation of the Tetrarchy, a dynastic schema that emphatically distanced women from the succession. Finally, in order to detect feminine responses to the empresses in dynastic propaganda, I will examine objects that evoke the empress, choices in personal adornment, and public munificence

Competing Succession Ideologies: Dynastic

There were three ideologies that emperors negotiated with their subjects over the course of the first three centuries of the Roman Empire. The first and earliest was dynasty, followed by adoption which dominated the second century, and finally, military prowess became the chief mode of legitimating emperors, and was predominant in the third century except for a handful of emperors who attempted to form dynasties. The Tetrarchy was a combination of all these forms.

By the latter half of the second century, there were two competing models of succession apparent in Rome. The Julio-Claudians promoted dynastic succession, in which the emperor's legitimacy rested primarily upon his familial lineage. In this schema, imperial women proved useful in legitimating the current emperor by calling attention to his relationship to the previous

emperor. They were also useful in identifying the emperor's successor. Augustus (27 BCE-14 CE) carefully managed his daughter Julia's marriages, employing them to designate his successors. As the daughter of the princeps, Julia was the guarantor of Augustus' line; her husbands were the heirs apparent and her children designated the next generation of rulers.¹⁶ Her first two husbands predeceased Augustus, and he thus experimented with publicizing his daughter Julia on coinage featuring her sons by Agrippa, Gaius and Lucius (*RIC* 1.405).¹⁷ Her appearance on coinage performed the same function that she did in real life: she connected two generations of important men.

The wives and mothers of emperors were largely absent after Julia's exile, and did not grace imperial coinage again until the reign of Caligula (37-41 CE). He advertised Agrippina the Elder posthumously, identifying her as Mother of Caius Caesar Germanicus.¹⁸ The names of his sisters Agrippina, Julia, and Drusilla appeared on his reverses in the guise of Securitas, Concordia, and Fortuna.¹⁹ Claudius celebrated his long-dead grandmother Livia on his coinage, the first emperor to do so, likely in order to celebrate his Claudian heritage. He also reclaimed his sister-in-law from Caligula, naming her AGRIPPINA M F GERMANICI CAESARIS (Agrippina, daughter of Marcus, wife of Germanicus Caesar).²⁰

The excess of Nero's reign failed to discredit the power of empresses to legitimate emperors or mark out their successors. Agrippina the Younger appears on the coinage of Caligula, Claudius and Nero. After her marriage to Claudius, she appears on the emperor's

¹⁶ Julia's husbands were each heirs apparent: Marcellus (d. 23 BCE), Agrippa (d. 12 BCE), and finally Tiberius (d. 37 CE). Her sons by Agrippa, Gaius and Lucius, were preferred over Tiberius, but they predeceased Augustus and did not inherit the throne (2 CE and 4 CE respectively).

¹⁷ For an example, see: [numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1\(2\).aug.405](http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1(2).aug.405)

¹⁸ [numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1\(2\).gai.22](http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1(2).gai.22)

¹⁹ [numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1\(2\).gai.33](http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1(2).gai.33)

²⁰ [numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1\(2\).cl.102](http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1(2).cl.102)

reverses as well as obverses with Nero on the reverse.²¹ In the first year of Nero's reign (54-68), she appeared face to face with her son on coins as well as in the foremost location of the jugate pose (*RIC* 1.1).²² Her titles appear on the obverse legend. The next issues bump Agrippina's titles to the reverse and place her in the rear position of the jugate pose (*RIC* 1.6).²³ Notably, when Galba was struggling for legitimacy (68-69 CE), he minted coins featuring the divine Livia, an association that invited viewers to associate him also with Augustus through his wife.

Competing Succession Ideologies: Adoption

Imperial women were not regularly featured in Flavian coinage with the exception of Julia, the daughter of Titus whom Domitian married. For about a decade after Nerva came to power (96-98 CE), they disappeared entirely from official media. This period saw the birth of a new succession ideology that is particularly evident in the writings of contemporary senators Pliny the Younger and Tacitus. Both authors sang the praises of Nerva and Trajan, two emperors who inaugurated the century of the "Five Good Emperors." Senators like Pliny and Tacitus encouraged emperors to select their successors from the Senate as articulated by Pliny (*Plin. Pan.* 7; *Tac. Hist.* 1.13-16). Adopted emperors were "the best men" chosen from the entire state and were characterized by their respectful relationship with the Senate.²⁴

²¹ [numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1\(2\).cl.80](http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1(2).cl.80) and [numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1\(2\).cl.75](http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.1(2).cl.75)

²² numismatics.org/collection/1905.57.291

²³ numismatics.org/collection/1967.153.219

²⁴ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 87-93.

Faustina the Younger was the imperial house's answer to adoptive succession ideology.²⁵ Antoninus Pius was the first "Good Emperor" to advertise his wife and daughter in earnest.²⁶ As the daughter of one emperor (Antoninus Pius), wife of another (Marcus Aurelius), and mother to a third (Commodus), Faustina the Younger appeared on imperial coinage as Augusta before her marriage to Marcus Aurelius.²⁷ As we will see below, Faustina's advertisement invited subjects to identify with the imperial *domus* and support dynastic succession. The Mater Castrorum title was awarded to Faustina by Marcus Aurelius around 175 as a propagandistic tool to facilitate the uncontested succession of Commodus and imply that the military and empress shared a close bond. Julia Domna was also awarded the Mater Castrorum title to promote Septimius Severus' dynasty, but more importantly, to tie Severus to the house of Marcus Aurelius and adopting populations. After the death of her husband, Julia Domna also received the titles Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae, likely from the Senate. As Langford posited, these titles may have been the capitulation of the Senate to the dynastic propaganda that advertised the metaphorical motherhood of the empress and perhaps even a plea to negotiate harmonious relations between her sons. The titles surely rung hollow after Caracalla murdered his brother, purportedly as Geta clung to his mother, begging her to save him (Cass. Dio 78(77).2.3-6).

The last empress to be celebrated in official media with any of the metaphorical motherhood titles (i.e. Mater Castrorum, Mater Senatus, or Mater Patriae) was Julia Mamaea, the niece of Julia Domna and mother of Severus Alexander. She and her son were murdered at the hands of their own the troops. We cannot be certain why post-Severan emperors refused their

²⁵ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen*.

²⁶ Clare Rowan, "Communicating a Consecratio: The Deification Coinage of Faustina I," in *Proceedings of the XIV International Numismatic Congress Glasgow 2009*, (International Numismatic Council, 2011), 991–98. Faustina the Elder's *Nachleben* in imperial coinage is rivaled only by Augustus'.

²⁷ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen*.

wives the metaphorical motherhood titles, but it seems likely that emperors found the title unpropitious, worried that their wives if so titled would suffer the same fate.²⁸ They may have steered clear of the titles to avoid associating their wives with Julia Mamaea because of her reputation as a domineering and greedy woman (Hdn. 6.1.10; *HA Alex. Sev.* 59). An emperor who had seized the purple in battle or was raised by his troops because of his *virtus* could little afford such an association with his wife.²⁹

Despite imperial hesitations, subjects nonetheless applied the metaphorical motherhood titles to empresses in dedicatory inscriptions and milestones throughout the third century. In particular, subject dedicants employed the *Mater Castrorum* title deliberately. The only women so honored were married to men who sought to establish their own dynasties. Subjects thus employed the title because it was meaningful to them. Perhaps for some subjects clung to the title because they longed for what it promised under Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus, namely, an uncontested succession. In continuing to employ the title in their inscriptions after imperial propaganda had abandoned it, subjects were augmenting dynastic propaganda, enthusiastically expressing their support for dynastic succession.³⁰

²⁸ Ittai Gradel posited that emperors labored under a similar sort of superstition about being worshipped as a god in Rome while still alive: what happened to Caesar would happen to any other emperor who dared follow in his footsteps. Ittai Gradel, “Caesar’s Divine Honours,” in *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 54–72.

²⁹ The discontinued use of these titles will be discussed in further depth in Chapter One.

³⁰ Julie Langford and Christina Hotalen, “*Mater Castrorum*: A History of Imperial Women and Succession Ideology,” in *Women and the Roman Army*, ed. Lee L. Brice and Elizabeth M. Greene, (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), 2. Epigraphic evidence demonstrates that the *Mater Castrorum* title was never marketed to the military, however, nor did the military regularly employ it in dedications to the imperial family, at least not initially

Competing Succession Ideologies: Military Prowess

After the assassination of Severus Alexander, the Roman Empire was on the brink of political and economic collapse in the period referred to as the Crisis of the Third Century from 235 to 284. In a span of fifty years at least twenty-six men were proclaimed emperor by the Senate and the military.³¹ In the third century, most emperors ascended to the throne through battlefield victories or ambitious troops who sought better leadership.³² In general, these soldier emperors did not seek to legitimate their reigns through associating themselves with earlier emperors. Instead, they advertised their military prowess, evidence not only of their *virtus* – their manliness and battlefield courage, but also *felicitas*, the favor of the gods. Emperors with sons sought to establish dynasties. The wives of these emperors found celebration on official media but in a far more conservative presentation than their first and second century counterparts.

Otacia's husband Philip the Arab came to power nine years after the murder of Severus Alexander, and his mother, Julia Mamaea. The couple were married in the 230s and had a son, Philip II, before he became emperor in 249.³³ Philip's intention to establish a dynasty is apparent from the publicity around Otacia. She received her Augusta title officially at the beginning of his reign, and her celebration on coinage, extensive for her short reign, focused primarily on her relationship with her husband and son. Nonetheless, subjects addressed her with titles such as Mater Caesaris and Mater Augusti that described her position, even if she did not receive them

³¹ There are at least six usurpers in the Gallic and Palmyrene Empires. For more, see Ando, *Imperial Rome AD 193 to 284*, 4.

³² Emperors proclaimed by the armies: Maximinus Thrax, Philip the Arab, Decius, Trebonianus Gallus, Aemilius Aemilianus, Valerian, Claudius Gothicus, Aurelian, Probus, Carus, and Diocletian.

³³ Ryan Ann Ricciardi, "Where Did All the Women Go: The Archaeology of the Soldier Empresses." Ph.D., University of Cincinnati, 2008: 143.

officially. They also awarded Otacilia with the metaphorical motherhoods that Julia Domna enjoyed officially, including Mater Castrorum, Mater Senatus, and Mater Patriae.

The nascent dynasties of third century emperors, however, were rarely realized because of assassinations, battlefield loses, and executions. Philip was no exception. Other emperors attempted to establish dynasties and failed after only a couple years including Trajan Decius (249-251), Aurelian (270-275), and Carinus (282-285). The longest-lived dynasty of the third century after the Severans was established by Valerian (253-260) with his son Gallienus (253-268). After Valerian's defeat and capture by the Sassanian emperor Shapur the Great in 260, Gallienus ruled alone over a fractured empire for an additional eight years. Under Gallienus' reign, Odenathus in Palmyra and Postumus in Gaul succeeded from the Empire. Both men acted as independent monarchs, Odenathus over the kingdom of Palmyra, and Postumus over the Gallic Empire. With the poor track record of emperors peacefully handing off power to their sons, emperors lost faith in dynastic claims that promised peace and prosperity. Their subjects however, apparently held onto their faith longer than the emperors.

Combining Succession Ideologies: The Tetrarchy

In 293, Diocletian founded the Tetrarchy and ruled as the Augustus of the eastern half of the empire until his retirement in 305. The Tetrarchy was a response to the failure of inherited succession ideology.³⁴ Under Diocletian, the Tetrarchy's approach to succession and legitimization depended on marriage alliances between the Augusti and Caesares. Diocletian and Maximian gave their daughters, Galeria Valeria and Theodora, to their junior colleagues,

³⁴ Olivier Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors: Roman Rulers and the Constraints of Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 278-9.

Galerius and Constantius Chlorus. Intermarriage between the daughters of the chief Tetrarchs and their Caesars unified them as a collegiate. The succession strategy of the Tetrarchy confirmed their role through marriage alliances with the decision being made by the Augusti. This is akin to the succession strategy of Augustus and his intended use of his daughter Julia. In essence, the Tetrarchy was a combination of all three ideologies. Diocletian's new system of selecting emperors with military valor was a combination of the first and second succession ideologies, using the daughters to legitimate the Caesars and adopting them on the basis of their military backgrounds.³⁵

Because the Tetrarchy prohibited inherited succession, Tetrarchic women as a rule received no attention in official media or responses to it. The only exception was Galeria who appears in the numismatic record between 308-311 when her husband Galerius minted coins in her name as did Licinius and Maximinus Daia. Galeria Valeria lived in a historical moment in which inherited succession had been rejected by emperors in favor of a meritocracy, a fictional brotherhood of rulers. Nonetheless, inherited succession still held a degree of support from some and advertising women still proved an effective means of legitimating emperors.

As in the previous Severan dynasty, Galeria Valeria was advertised in order to legitimate Galerius as Diocletian's successor upon his elevation to Augustus of the eastern half of the empire. Galeria's coin types were not minted until she was proclaimed Augusta (presumably at the proposal of Galerius) at the Conference of Carnuntum in November 308.³⁶ The Augusta title,

³⁵ Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors*, 314.

³⁶ Timothy David Barnes says Galeria married Galerius prior to his becoming Caesar, but there appears to be no clear consensus on whether they were married before or after his elevation. See Timothy David Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982), 4; and Dietmar Kienast, *Römische Kaisertabelle. Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie*, (Darmstadt, Wiss. Buchge, 2004), 58; 286.

advertised on coinage, emphasized her prestigious position as the wife of Galerius.³⁷ Her coins offer no variation in legends and artistic motifs: the obverse is a simple side portrait with Venus Victrix on the reverse.³⁸ Additionally, Galeria was also celebrated by a handful of subjects as the Mater Castrorum on inscriptions (*IG* II² 5203, *IG* VII 2503, *CIL* 3, 13661, *IGRR* 4, 1562). Notably, none of her coinage employed the Mater Castrorum title, which suggests that it was never officially awarded to her.

Ancient Literary Sources

Contemporary third century literary sources are largely uninterested in the lives and details of imperial women and their histories. Primary sources mainly concern themselves with political and military events. Herodian and Cassius Dio are two contemporary sources of the Severan dynasty. Cassius Dio (155-235) was a Greek senator who wrote an eighty-book history of Rome from its foundation to the present (229). Dio's historical narratives are unique because of their anecdotal style, which doubly acted as a commentary on the Severan period. As a senator writing in the first third of the third century, Dio's writings recall the senatorial historical-writing tradition by maintaining the notion that senators were interpreters of the past.³⁹ Because of his position as senator and sometimes member of the emperor's *concilium*, his close proximity to the

³⁷ It is unclear who gave Galeria the honorific of Augusta. Since this Conference was called between the Tetrarchs to settle succession disputes, it can only be assumed that Galerius bestowed the titles on his wife in order to legitimize his authority in the east.

³⁸ Venus is the patron goddess of the *gens Iulia* and was widely promoted on coinage of imperial figures. For women, she is often associated with her procreative powers as the progenitor of dynasties. I explore Venus Victrix reverse types in Chapter 1.

³⁹ Adam M. Kemezis, *Greek Narratives of the Roman Empire under the Severans: Cassius Dio, Philostratus and Herodian* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 149.

imperial court provided him insight into the Severan dynasty and thus his account can be useful in understanding the inner workings of the Palace.

Herodian (170-240) wrote his eight volume *History of the Empire from the Death of Marcus*, covering the period of 180-238. Almost nothing is known about the author; he hardly provides commentary or gives us any hint of his personality in the context of his narrative. Unlike Cassius Dio, Herodian describes a world familiar to his readers but one that is unexpectedly chaotic where rules do not apply.⁴⁰ His characters make wrong decisions based on expectations from the Antonine age that were no longer relevant in the Severan period.⁴¹ Though modern historians often remark on Herodian's rhetoric and tend to discount the accuracy of his narrative, he offers aspects both of the official narrative beside current rumor.⁴² I will thus employ Herodian as a useful guide in how subjects interpreted the events inside the palace.

Both Cassius Dio and Herodian are useful sources for elite responses to the advertisement of Julia Domna. Dio, like Herodian, must be treated with caution because of his biases. As Herodian himself observes, ambitious writers wrote histories and poetry exaggerating Severus and his victories in order to win imperial favor and he saw himself as an exemplar of unbiased historical writing (Hdn. 2.15.6-8).⁴³ Dio was such an author and he admitted as much about the pamphlet he wrote concerning the omens and dreams legitimizing Severus's ascension to power (Cass. Dio 75(74).3).

Written during the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, the *Historia Augusta* is a collection of thirty biographies that covers the lives of Hadrian through Numerian (117-284),

⁴⁰ Kemezis, *Greek Narratives*, 228; 261.

⁴¹ Kemezis, *Greek Narratives*, 229.

⁴² Graham Anderson, *The Second Sophistic. A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 107.

⁴³ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 51.

though the lives from Philip the Arab to Aemilianus have not survived. The *Historia Augusta* was modeled after Suetonius's *Twelve Caesars*. The *Historia Augusta*'s limitations are its authorship, date, and purpose, all of which are unknown to us. Also problematic are the falsehoods and exaggerations contained within the *Historia Augusta*, making it an unreliable historical source. Despite these limitations, however, the *Historia Augusta* is useful in revealing the preoccupations of historians living in the fourth century and the small role assigned to women in the *Vitae* of the emperors might reflect their reduced role under the soldier emperors. Because the later lives are lost, I will employ the *Historia Augusta* only to explore Faustina's Mater Castrorum title. Though the information is problematic, besides Dio, it is the only ancient testimony of the title. Its information regarding even Julia Domna, is problematic since most of the information recorded is inaccurate and exaggerated.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, as one of the only extant literary sources for this period. I will employ evidence from the *Historia Augusta* whenever relevant and weigh it against other literary, epigraphic, or numismatic evidence.

No primary sources mentioning Otacilia Severa survive, and those that mention her husband, Philip the Arab, are late, laconic, and problematic. For example, Zonaras was a twelfth century Byzantine chronicler writing under the emperor Alexios I Komnenos. His epitome (*Ἐπιτομή Ἱστοριῶν*) spans eighteen books beginning with the creation of the world and concluding with the death of Emperor Alexios in 1118. In his narration of the third century, Zonaras relied on Cassius Dio as a source up until 229.⁴⁵ Beyond this date, his sources for succeeding periods become less clear. Book 12.19 covers Philip's ascension to imperial power,

⁴⁴ Ando, *Imperial Rome*, 12; Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 8.

⁴⁵ Most scholars accept the view posited by Alexander Enmann in 1884 that Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and the anonymous author of the *Historia Augusta*, drew from the so-called *Kaisergeschicht* (*The History of Emperors*). Enmann came to this conclusion by noting the similarities and errors each work contained. Unfortunately, no manuscript of this supposed history survives; see Riccardi, "Where Did All the Women Go," 5.

the appointment of Philip II as his colleague, the Persian and Moesian campaigns, and the deaths of Philip and his son on the battlefield against Decius. There is no mention of Otacilia nor Philip's personal life, other than his alleged ties to Christianity.⁴⁶

Eutropius' ten book epitome, *Breviarium historiae Romanae*, covers the foundation of the city to the rise of the emperor Valens. Eutropius was an administrator in the latter half of the fourth century CE and served under Julian (the Apostate), Gratian and Theodosius I, and Valentinian II. Eutropius' account is problematic because his treatment of Philip is briefer than Zonaras'. Eutropius succinctly outlines Philip's ascent to power, presiding over the thousandth-year anniversary of Rome celebration, and his and Philip II's death on the battlefield (Eutr. 9.3).

Aurelius Victor's only existing work, *Liber de Caesaribus*, is a set of imperial biographies from Augustus to Constantius II. He served under the emperors Julian and Theodosius and was a contemporary of Ammianus Marcellinus. Aurelius Victor reports that Philip and his son built a water reservoir to assist a region plagued by droughts, celebrated the thousandth-year anniversary of Rome with games, and attempted to ban male prostitution to save the empire from moral degeneracy. Aurelius Victor's biography of Philip ends with his defeat at the hands of Decius and the assassination of Philip II in the praetorian camp. The sources do not agree on the nature of Philip's death. Zonaras and Zosimus (see below) claim that both Philips died on the battlefield, while Eutropius suggests the elder Philip was defeated in Verona and the younger Philip died in Rome. Scholars generally accept Eutropius' view, claiming that it was unlikely for the young Philip, a mere thirteen-year-old, to accompany his father against Decius.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Book 12.19 of Zonaras reports that Philip joined the Christians in prayers and received communion in the church. Zonaras dismisses claims that Philip was the father of the martyr Eugenia.

⁴⁷ Michael Peachin, "Which Philip?," *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik* 73 (1988): 98–100, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20186859>. Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus*, trans. H.W. Bird (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 128, fn. 8.

Aurelius Victor mentions the empress Galeria Valeria in brief when he discusses the formation of the Tetrarchy (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39).

Galeria Valeria hardly appears in any primary sources with the exception of Lactantius, who discusses her in a moralizing manner, especially in the context of the Christian Persecutions.⁴⁸ Lactantius served as an adviser to the emperor Constantine, the first Christian emperor. His *De Mortibus Persecutorum* (250-325) chronicles the persecutions beginning with Nero, Domitian, Decius, Valerian, and Aurelian, and the deaths of emperors who persecuted the Christians, especially the first Tetrarchic emperors. Lactantius was clearly a biased source and paints those who persecuted Christians in the worst possible light. Lactantius describes the deaths of Galeria and her mother Prisca, whom Licinius publicly executed (Lactantius, *Mort. Pers.* 50). He also reported that the crowd gathered to witness the executions felt pity for the condemned women who were beheaded and their bodies thrown into the river.

Zosimus, writing his *Historia Nova* under the reign of Anastasius (491-518), is one of the most comprehensive sources for the third century. He records the history of the Roman Empire from Augustus to Diocletian in the first book. In books two, three, and four, he covers the ascension of Constantius Chlorus and Galerius to the death of Theodosius I (305-395). Zosimus was primarily interested in political and military events, and he rarely mentions social or cultural issues, to say nothing of the private lives of emperors or their wives. He is thus of little assistance to this project.

⁴⁸ Lactantius reports that Diocletian forced his wife Prisca and daughter Galeria to be polluted by making sacrifices (Lact. *De mort. pers.* 15.1). It is likely that Galeria was condemned because of her association with Diocletian and Galerius as masterminds of the great persecution.

Considering this body of sources and their limitations, one can see why material culture becomes essential in uncovering the images of imperial women and how they functioned in dynastic propaganda and the creation of succession ideologies.

Historiography on Imperial Women

Empresses and their images were prominent aspects of imperial self-presentation that allowed emperors to legitimate themselves and promote their sons as successors.⁴⁹ Emperors presented carefully constructed images of themselves and their families through numismatic types and legends. How much control imperial women had over their images is debatable, but it seems likely that although they may have controlled aspects of their appearance such as hairstyle or ornamentation, the use of those images was controlled by the emperor and his administrations, employed at his pleasure and in order to promote himself and his dynasty, not to celebrate the empress *per se*.⁵⁰

Scholars have largely overlooked third century imperial women with the notable exception of Julia Domna.⁵¹ Susann Lusnia noted that earlier scholars attributed Domna's frequent advertisement in coins and inscriptions to the "oriental" influence she introduced to

⁴⁹ Noreña, "The Communication of the Emperor's Virtues," 146; "Marietta Horster. "The Emperor's Family on Coins (Third Century): Ideology of Stability in Times of Unrest," in *Crises in Empire* (2014), 291–309; Rowan, *Under Divine Auspices*, 2. This consensus is a departure from A.H.M. Jones' argument in 1959, when he suggested that coin legends and types functioned similarly to modern postage stamps and numismatists were over-emphasizing their purpose. He further argued that if coin iconography was, indeed, relevant to the emperor's agenda, then surely ancient historians would have commented on them. Furthermore, Jones suggested that coins and their illustrations would have meant nothing to the average individual. A.H.M. Jones, "Numismatics and History," *Essays in Roman Coinage* presented to Harold Mattingly, ed. R. A. G. Carson and C. H. V. Sutherland (Oxford, 1956), 13-33. For a greater overview of this debate, please refer to Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 9 and Rowan, *Under Divine Auspices*, 23.

⁵⁰ Wood, *Imperial Women*, 2.

⁵¹ I suspect the reason why more work has been produced on Julia Domna is that her coins, inscriptions, and other items survive in greater quantity than for most other empresses.

Roman culture. Lusnia rejected the notion that Roman culture became oriental and demonstrated that Domna was not any more powerful than earlier empresses.⁵² Lusnia argues that Domna's titles were not all that extraordinary since earlier women received those titles first.⁵³ Langford is split and countered that the titles were extraordinary but agreed with Lusnia that Domna may have not been any more powerful than the empresses that preceded her. As Langford suggests, it was a difference between visibility and power.⁵⁴ Instead, Lusnia suggested that Severus sought to establish a dynasty for his two sons using Julia Domna's image by imitating the style and representation of Antonine women, thus connecting Severus to the Antonine dynasty.⁵⁵

Like Lusnia, Barbara Levick also rejects the notion that the empress introduced eastern ideas and customs into Roman politics and art. She argues that the original theory was based upon nineteenth century anti-Semitism of German scholarship, and in fact, Roman religious institutions did not undergo the dramatic changes claimed by proponents of the theory, nor was Domna ever given "unusual divine honors" during her lifetime.⁵⁶ Levick concludes that Domna's influence ultimately depended on Severus and Caracalla and she was not capable of deviating outside her perceived role.⁵⁷

Julie Langford's conclusions in *Maternal Megalomania* were discussed in detail above, but here it is useful to note that her observations there were based upon her data from her online *Severan Database Project*. The *SDP* included two databases constructed by Langford and her

⁵² "Eastern" cultural norms, i.e. Syrian; Susann Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage and Severan Dynastic Propaganda," in *Latomus* 54 (1995):119.

⁵³ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," 137.

⁵⁴ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 1-13.

⁵⁵ Lusnia indicates that Julia's coins can be viewed in three distinctive periods from 193 through 217. For more, see Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," 121-2.

⁵⁶ Levick, *Julia Domna*, 162-3.

⁵⁷ Another scholar that worked extensively on Julia Domna's coinage is Riccardo Bertolazzi who examined Julia Domna's maternity as advertised on imperial coinage. His study is particularly useful for my own research, but I discovered the article too late for me to use at this time. Levick, *Julia Domna*, 1-2.

undergraduate researchers, while the third was created by Clare Rowan and supplemented by USF undergraduates to cross reference the hoards with *Roman Imperial Coinage*, the standard reference for imperial coinage. I will discuss this in greater detail under the Digital Humanities section.

The attention that scholars have given Julia Domna has not been extended to Otacilia Severa, wife of Marcus Julius Philippus better known as Philip the Arab.⁵⁸ Ryan Ann Ricciardi examined the wives of the so-called soldier emperors in literary texts, sculpture, coinage, and epigraphy. Ricciardi argues that imperial women wielded considerably more influence than historians have traditionally acknowledged. She suggests that empresses controlled their own images and constantly changed them to appease civic and military audiences in an effort to garner support.⁵⁹ Since literary sources are overwhelmingly silent about Otacilia, I will employ the *Matres Castrorum Inscriptions* and *Imperial Coinage* databases to demonstrate how her celebration differed considerably from the Severan empresses who preceded her, as well as how subjects addressed her in inscriptions and a surviving cameo.

Imperial self-presentation changed dramatically under Diocletian's Tetrarchy. Portraits of the tetrarchs remained uniform throughout the empire during the tenure of the first Tetrarchy; imperial women and children were absent in state art and inscriptions. Scholars have differing explanations for the absence of Tetrarchic empresses in imperial art and advertising. Dietmar Kienast suggested that the Tetrarchs chose not to advertise their wives due to their low social

⁵⁸ Major scholarship of the third century empresses, including Otacilia Severa include: Brigitte Klein, "Tranquillina, Otacilia, Etruscilla und Salonina: vier Kaiserinnen des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr." Ph.D. Diss., Saarbrücken, 1998; Peachin, *Roman Imperial Titulature and Chronology*; Max Wegner, *Die Herrscherbildnisse in antoninische Zeit* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann. 1939); Susan Wood, *Roman Portrait Sculpture 217–260 A.D.: the Transformation of an Artistic Tradition (Columbia studies in the classical tradition XII)* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986).

⁵⁹ Ricciardi does not take into consideration that women's likenesses in imperial media were a collaboration between the artist and a male relative, usually the emperor, or brother and father. For more, see Ricciardi, "Where Did All the Women Go," iv; 4-5.

background, while Olivier Hekster argued that Diocletian deliberately excluded imperial women to deemphasize their influence.⁶⁰

Anne Chen rejects the often-unstated scholarly assumptions that the absence of Tetrarchic women is the result of a lack of evidence due to *damnationes memoriae* or a refusal to include women in official media because they served no dynastic purpose. For her, the absence of Tetrarchic women in official media was intentional and marked a new approach to imperial self-presentation that entailed an unprecedented aura of divinity and claimed legitimacy as a product of membership in the ethereal brotherhood of Tetrarchic rulers.⁶¹ Chen's analysis breaks off in 306, however, and thus misses the reemergence of the advertisement of Galeria Valeria by no less than three emperors – Galerius, Licinius, and Maximinius Daia, all of whom advertised the empress on coinage in hopes of gaining a degree of legitimacy from association with her.⁶² Galeria Valeria and her elevation to Augusta in 308 thus represent an anomaly among Tetrarchic women who were absent in state art and inscriptions.

A survey of ancient literary sources and the dearth of modern scholarship means that material evidence is our best source for understanding the role of these empresses in negotiating succession ideologies. In particular, I examine imperial coinage in order to reconstruct propaganda, inscriptions mentioning the empresses to measure responses by imperial subjects, and an assortment of personal items owned by women and feature representations of the empresses to detect feminine responses to dynastic propaganda.

⁶⁰ Kienast, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, 56-58; Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors*, 280; 282-283.

⁶¹ Anne Hunnell Chen, "Omitted Empresses: The (Non-)Role of Imperial Women in Tetrarchic Propaganda" *Journal of Late Antiquity* 11, no. 1 (2018): 69-76.

⁶² I discuss Galeria's coinage in greater depth in Chapter One.

Material Culture and Digital Humanities

Digital Humanities methodologies are particularly useful in this study. The dearth of official narratives concerning the reigns of third century emperors means that imperial propaganda about the empresses must be reconstructed from numismatic evidence. I employed a data from nearly 1,300 coin types to do so, a feat not possible without digital technology. The opposite is true with epigraphic evidence; nearly 700 inscriptions in Latin and Ancient Greek record subject responses. These responses are so plentiful as to demands digitization and visualization for proper analysis. On the other hand, the evidence for feminine responses to dynastic propaganda are best analyzed qualitatively.

Scholarship on imperial coinage constitutes an important foundation for this study. In order to obtain authority, ambitious leaders used coinage to broadcast their messages to the masses to gain support. But this was not the primary or only advantage of minting coinage. Coins represented the agenda and virtues of the emperor and his family.⁶³ They survive in great quantities since nearly everyone in the empire used Roman coins in transactions. Furthermore, coins are laden with meaning. They bear portraits of the emperor and his family, and the types and legends often link them with depictions of divine figures. Because of the religious and secular iconography, these coins are imbedded with symbolism that assists in the creation of imperial propaganda. For these reasons, coins serve as an excellent primary source for imperial propaganda and as a supplement to the sparse and biased extant literary sources.⁶⁴ I begin with

⁶³ Noreña, "The Communication of the Emperor's Virtues," 147.

⁶⁴ The acceptance by scholars of the importance of propaganda appearing on reverse types is a relatively recent development in the study of imperial representation. It had been assumed that an emperors' coinage was controlled by an emperor until 1956 when AHM Jones suggested that they were no different than modern postage stamps and that the man on the street cared very little and understood still less concerning their content. For a full discussion see Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 140 n. 27.

the presumption that imperial women probably controlled some aspects of their appearance but ultimately their role in propaganda was determined by the emperor.⁶⁵

Subject populations of diverse social and economic backgrounds raised dedicatory inscriptions throughout the Empire. They participated in the negotiation of imperial ideology by responding to the imperial administration through the erection of inscriptions celebrating the imperial domus. I have recorded 619 inscriptions dedicated to Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa, and Galeria Valeria. Though this seems like a gold-mine of information, many of these inscriptions are fragmentary and marred with erasures of *damnationes memoriae* which complicate their interpretation. The readings and dating of inscriptions in most cases can only be approximated based upon the usage of titulature. Because subject populations augmented these at will, their dedications are not reliable guides to official titulature, but they do shed light on the messages populations sought to convey to the emperor about his dynastic ambitions.

While daunting to interpret, inscriptions provide important information on the dedicants who commissioned the texts and may well illuminate events occurring around the time of their dedication. Inscriptions demonstrate how individuals and specific populations responded to imperial propaganda. The geographical distribution can reveal where the most active supporters of the emperors were in the Empire and offers clues to which populations were privy to which aspects of imperial self-promotion.⁶⁶ Inscriptions represent responses to imperial propaganda.

⁶⁵ Recently Ricardo Bertolazzi has claimed that Julia Domna in particular and imperial women in general had more control over their images than scholars have generally realized. Bertolazzi's work came to my attention too late in this project to be fully considered. I will simply say here that Bertolazzi's comments come at the end of an article with which I generally agree and my findings complement. His remarks concerning the empress' control of her image appear to be his own interpretation, lacking evidence or citations to back him up. I will address my own opinions concerning this question in Chapter One. Riccardo Bertolazzi, "Julia Domna and Her Divine Motherhood: A Re-Examination of the Evidence from Imperial Coins," *The Classical Journal* 114, no. 4 (2019): 464–86; Wood, *Imperial Women*, 2.

⁶⁶ Sometimes, however, the more remote an area is, the less likely it will be that an inscription will survive. These observations must be balanced against the question of survival. There is no good way of knowing what percentage of ancient material has survived to this day, which makes it difficult to tell whether our sample sizes are sufficiently

Official titulature was an emperor's official *cursus honorum*, and the recitation of his titulature demonstrated and reinforced the subjects' acceptance of the emperor's authority.⁶⁷

Evidence such as jewelry, dolls, and dedicatory inscriptions offer insight as to how elite and non-elite women responded to the empress' images in official media. Studying material culture is useful because personal objects demonstrate the owner's wealth, social standing, and personal history.⁶⁸ Dolls, jewelry, and hairstyles were not necessarily expected to catch the eye of the emperor, but they reflect how the possessor identified with the empress in some way, although just how the possessors did so must have varied considerably from woman to woman. These artifacts invited the possessors to see themselves not simply as subjects but as somehow akin to the empress. Other women mimicked the empress as patron, priestesses, and "Mothers" of their cities or local *collegia*. They express their identification with the empress by including her in their honorary and dedicatory inscriptions.

Digital Humanities Methodology

This project's digital humanities component opens ancient history to the study of imperial women in ways not previously possible. The collaborative nature of the databases allows for feminist and Roman scholars to expand or query the data for their own research purposes. With approximately 1,340 coin and 900 inscription entries, there many opportunities for future scholars to enhance our understanding of the Roman empire from 193 to 315. Scholars, students,

large to make any definitive conclusions. However, we can only work with the evidence that we have, and with this recognition, we acknowledge that quantitative analysis is at best a rough idea of ancient realities.

⁶⁷ Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 2.

⁶⁸ Mihaly Csikzentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, edited by Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1993), 20-29.

curators, and anyone interested in coinage and inscriptions are able to freely download the data available on the Severan Database Github page (github.com/usf-portal/severan-database-project).

Some inscriptions and coinage mentioning the empresses are quite plentiful and thus, it was necessary to create databases in order to perform qualitative and quantitative analyses. Digitizing inscriptions and coinage in a searchable format on Excel allows users to search across vast numbers of records with greater ease than flipping through catalogs or online resources.⁶⁹ The databases also allowed for visualization of the evidence which has proven important for uncovering previously undetected patterns.

In 2012, Langford expanded access to the material evidence of Julia Domna considerably with the online publication of the *Severan Database Project*. These three databases made possible quantitative analysis of provincial coinage, the inscriptions of Julia Domna, and Severan period hoards. The *Severan Provincial Coinage* database offers digitized images and legends of nearly 2,500 provincial coins produced under the Severan dynasty from fourteen key Eastern mints; the *Inscriptions of Julia Domna* digitized but did not translate all of the empress' extant 749 inscriptions; and the *Severan Hoard Analysis* consisted of the contents of 57 Severan period hoards compiled by Clare Rowan and cross referenced by USF undergraduate and graduate researchers with *Roman Imperial Coinage*, the standard reference for imperial coinage.⁷⁰ These databases were the basis of Langford's 2013 *Maternal Megalomania*. Unfortunately, the USF server on which these databases were stored failed irreparably early in 2019 (web3.cas.usf.edu/main/other/severan/).⁷¹

⁶⁹ Hugh Cayless et al., "Epigraphy in 2017," digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/3/1/000030/000030.html

⁷⁰ This database was instrumental for Langford's arguments concerning the civilian audience for Mater Castrorum dynastic propaganda under Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus.

⁷¹ USF houses an older version of the databases on a new server, hennarot.forest.usf.edu/main/other/severan/



Figure 1. Restored Severan Database Project interface

In June 2019, Langford and I, with the considerable assistance of David J. Thomas, rebuilt the *Inscriptions of Julia Domna*, refining the data by expanding the columns, removing typographical errors, and providing full translations of each inscription. We also double checked the inscriptions, citations, and translations for accuracy.⁷² We next gathered, translated, and analyzed all inscriptions mentioning the other thirteen empresses who received the *Mater Castrorum* title, regardless of whether they received the title officially or were awarded it by subjects in dedicatory or honorific inscriptions. These actions allow us to detect greater detail in dedicant types and patterns as well as geographical distribution. The resulting *Matres Castrorum Inscriptions* database is the foundation for my observations on inscriptions erected both by the imperial domus and subject populations in Chapters One and Two. Numismatic data on imperial coinage for these empresses was downloaded from the *Online Coins of the Roman Empire*.

⁷² USF's Matt King also contributed to this project over the winter break of 2019-2020. He offered to help us translate dozens of Latin inscriptions "for fun." Both Langford and I are very grateful for the assistance we received from Dave and Matt.

Langford and I added columns to this data in order to visualize the motherhood themes prevalent on coinage. The resulting database is the *Matres Castrorum Imperial Coinage* is the basis of my remarks concerning imperial coin types and legends. Langford and I gathered data from MANTIS, an online database of the American Numismatic Society's collections, as well as Online Coins of the Roman Empire to collect all the types and legends for Julia Domna through Galeria Valeria.⁷³

The approximately 900 inscriptions and 1,340 coin types gathered in the *Matres Castrorum Inscriptions* and *Imperial Coinage* databases allow access to the more arcane and inaccessible aspects of study of imperial women in ways not previously possible without considerable language training and extensive travel. The data are now accessible to those who do not read Ancient Greek or Latin and allow for scholars interested in imperial women and the construction of dynastic ideologies to expand or query the data for their own research purposes. These databases were not only the result of collaboration for this dissertation, but they open opportunities for future scholars to enhance our understanding of the Roman empire from 193 to 315 CE. Scholars, students, curators, and anyone interested in coinage and inscriptions are able to freely download the data available on the Severan Database Github page (github.com/usf-portal/severan-database-project).

⁷³ All websites for online coin resources are provided in the Appendix.

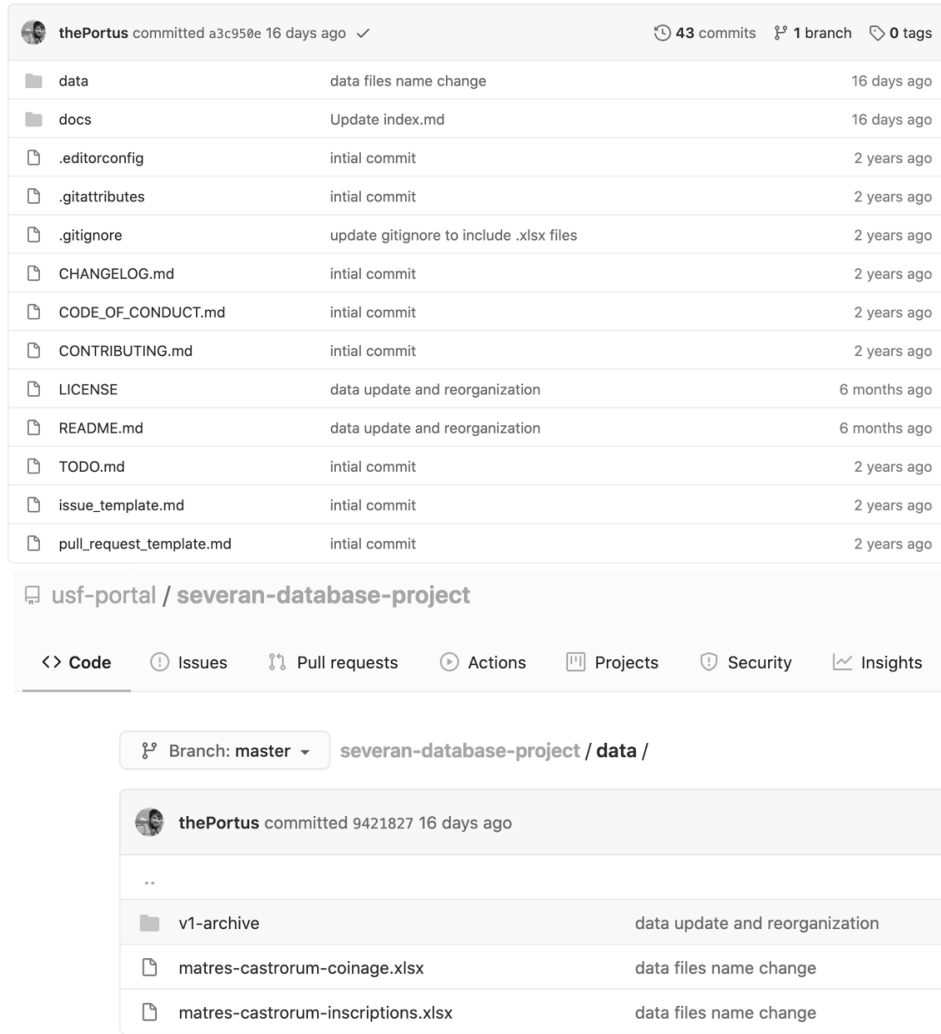


Figure 2. Severan Database Project on GitHub. The data folder contains the excel spreadsheet of coinage and inscriptions for the Matres Castrorum.

Over the course of the last year, Julie Langford and I employed these databases for our forthcoming article on the history of the Mater Castrorum title. We examined the negation of dynastic ideology through the use of the Mater Castrorum title which was awarded officially to only three of the thirteen empresses to whom it was attributed. In order to detect the ideology that was created in the exchange of communications between the emperor and his subjects, Langford and I first attempted to establish the official titlature, i.e., titles that are featured on

coinage and imperial art. We began with numismatic evidence, examining imperial coinage as an official expression of the imperial narratives.

When it came to epigraphic evidence, Langford and I looked for any inscriptions erected to the empresses and collected nearly 900 inscriptions in the process. Inscriptions were then categorized by their type and medium, noting whether they were erected to the empress alone or mentioned the empress within the imperial domus. Thanks to GPS coordinates, we are able to visualize the locations of inscriptions and thus group them according to ancient city, Roman province as well as modern city and country. We are also able to view honorific trends over time thanks to Tableau software, through which we visualized our data.

Dedicants were categorized under dedicant types like military, veteran, civic, individual, non-governmental, or imperial administrator to ensure that we would get the best and most accurate reporting from our dataset. These dedicant types are based on our own categories of analysis. The dedicant types were then broken down into subset (i.e. cities, *collegia*, magistrates, priests, etc.), dedicant name, dedicant title (*procurator*, *milites*, *decurion*, equestrian, etc.), and sometimes the name or just title. Dedicant titles were useful in determining dedicant types, even if the name of the dedicant was missing or unknown. A subtype category allowed us to further narrow the type of dedicant, e.g. veteran, praetorian, or military group within the dedicant type Military. We quickly came to see, however, that the subtype was also useful to account for specialized types of inscriptions that are lacking any dedicant information. Thus, the subtypes also contain Milestones as an inscription type.⁷⁴

The *Matres Castrorum Inscriptions* and *Matres Castrorum Coinage* datasets also form the basis for my interpretations of dynastic propaganda and responses to it. My dissertation

⁷⁴ Initially, Langford and I designated every milestone as military inscriptions until we noted that wide variety of titlature in them as well as an occasional milestone the claims to be erected by a city.

expands on our publication by examining how subjects responded to dynastic propaganda using additional titlature beyond the Mater Castrorum. The information and all images associated with this dissertation can be found online (<https://embodyingempire.wordpress.com/>). The visualizations are available for viewing, interaction, and download on Tableau Public (public.tableau.com/profile/christina.hotalen#!/).

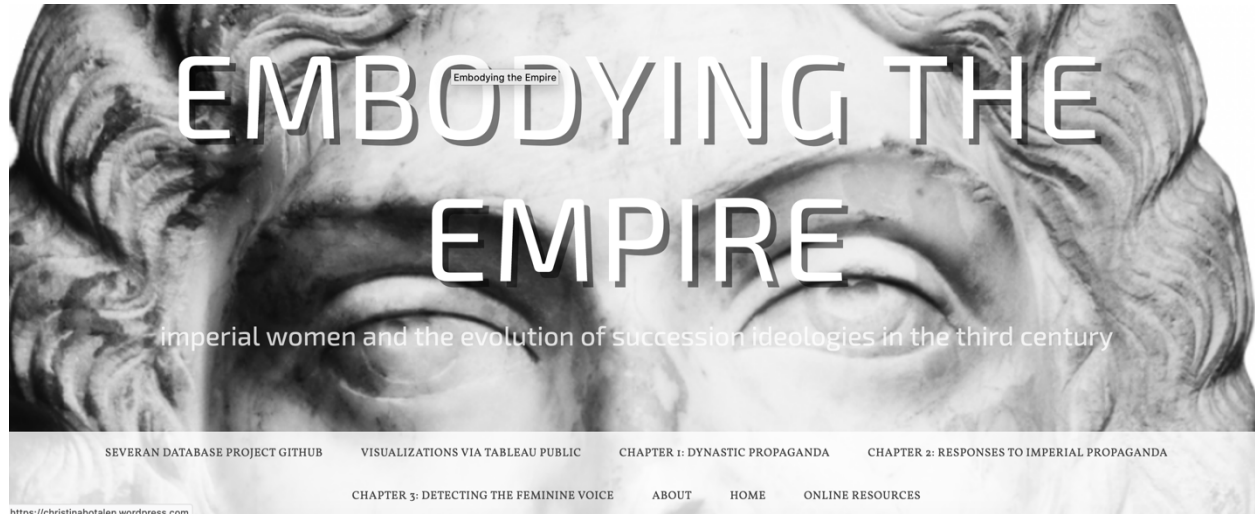


Figure 3. Screenshot for Embodying the Empire. Github page and Tableau Visualizations are available for download in the top menu bar.

Several scholars of the third century have already turned to digital humanities methodologies in order to better understand the material evidence that remains. Influential to this study is Carlos Noreña, who examined nearly 150,000 denarii to detect common imperial virtues claimed by emperors from Vespasian to Severus Alexander.⁷⁵ Noreña argues that coins are the best evidence to illustrate those virtues thought to be most important in legitimizing emperors. To better understand the most prominent themes on imperial coinage, Noreña measured the frequency of virtues that emperors claimed for themselves.⁷⁶ I seek to build upon his methods by applying his numismatic-centric approach to the reigns of individual emperors.

⁷⁵ Noreña, “The Communication of the Emperor’s Virtues,” 146.

⁷⁶ Noreña, “The Communication of the Emperor’s Virtues,” 147.

Clare Rowan argued that die analyses should be used in quantifying coinage rather than hoards and coin data.⁷⁷ Coin dies are useful in knowing approximately how many coins were struck and the number of dies used in issuing particular types. Such a study is impossible to undertake since none of the dies survive and if they did, it would be difficult to determine how many coins were struck. The next best option is hoard data, which are useful in determining the relative frequency of varying coins types that were issued and used as currency during their time.⁷⁸ There are motivations involved with collecting a coin hoard that should be taken into consideration when referring to them. As a result, I use coin data collected from online databases and will refer to the *RIC* to double-check.

Using hoard data, Rowan employed coin hoards in her study of Severan propaganda and its claims of divine favor.⁷⁹ She examined each of the Severan emperors' self-presentation on coinage in order to determine the individual propagandistic priorities of each emperor (193-235 CE). Rowan was especially interested in the frequency of coin types minted under each Severan emperor. She referred to her methodology as a "quantification of ideology."⁸⁰ For instance, Rowan found that although Severus seized the throne, only 25 percent of his reverse types pertained to military themes, while 39% of his reverses portrayed personifications of Virtues. Rowan argued that the choice of iconography was designed to soften memories of the emperor's brutal elimination of his enemies after his civil wars against Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus. Playing up virtuous themes helped legitimize the dynasty and guaranteed the harmonious and smooth succession between heirs. Employing Rowan's methodology is

⁷⁷ Rowan, *Under Divine Auspices*, 25.

⁷⁸ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 9; Rowan, *Under Divine Auspices*, 26.

⁷⁹ Langford used this dataset to arrive at her findings as well. For further information, see below.

⁸⁰ Rowan, *Under Divine Auspices*, 3.

particularly useful in gaining a nuanced perspective of how imperial ideology was negotiated between audiences and individual emperors.⁸¹

Erika Manders also employed imperial coinage in her investigation of third century emperors. Her methodology is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis of coin types. Quantifying coin types allows Manders to trace patterns and developments while qualitative analysis allows for results to be placed in a historical context.⁸² Her analysis springs from a database she assembled from coin cabinets and the *Roman Imperial Coinage* volumes (IV and V). From these sources, Manders believed that she could ascertain the frequency of types and messages. Relying on coin cabinets can be problematic since they are the product of collectors who collected the rare and unusual types rather than duplicates of common types.⁸³ As a result, Manders measures the frequency of types that privileges the rare and unusual. Ultimately, Manders' study demonstrates the collecting habits of numismatic curators rather than the frequency of the original issuers.

Outline of the Chapters

In Chapter One, "Dynastic Propaganda," I offer a survey of imperial propaganda featuring Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa, and Galeria Valeria in state inscriptions, art, and reverse types and legends of imperial coinage. The reverse types on coinage were devised to remind

⁸¹ Rowan, *Under Divine Auspices*, 4.

⁸² Manders, *Coining Images of Power*, 309.

⁸³ Rowan, *Under Divine Auspices*, 4; Langford and Noreña also maintain the same position: Julie Langford, review of *Coining Images of Power: Patterns in the Representation of Roman Emperors on Imperial Coinage, A.D. 193-284*, by Erika Manders, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 2014; Noreña, "The Communication of the Emperor's Virtues," 148.

people of certain events or particular virtues, especially familial.⁸⁴ Official imagery depicting the empress and her children was intended to offer subjects a more intimate glance inside the emperor's *domus* and invited subjects to have a familial bond with the emperor.⁸⁵ Emperors employed family metaphors and metaphorical motherhood titles to promote a succession ideology that privileged dynastic over adopted succession. Familial metaphors in state art provided subjects a sense of belonging to the imperial family, and ultimately, the empire. Such devotion promised a smooth succession. Julia Domna's reverse types follow the maternal imagery found on Faustina's coinage.⁸⁶ Marcus Aurelius and the Severan emperors promoted metaphorical motherhood in order to "adopt" the military, thus assuring their civilian subjects of a peaceful transfer of power. These reverse types were used to drown out any senatorial opposition to dynastic succession versus adoptive succession.

The *Matres Castrorum Coinage* database allows me to sort and analyze coin types of individual empresses and the messages about them that the imperial administration advertised to its subjects. Consideration of legends, iconographic elements, and portraits on obverses and reverses can reveal the messages that these coins conveyed. Taken together, coin types allow for a reconstruction of emperor's narrative of his reign and his plans for the future. The empress appeared on coinage at the emperor's pleasure, but as the case of Faustina demonstrated, her image could be employed to press home dynastic propaganda. Inadvertently, such propaganda invited public scrutiny over her sexual behavior and the legitimacy of the emperor's dynastic

⁸⁴ Olivier Hekster, "Coins and Messages: Audience Targeting on Coins of Different Denominations?," in *The Representations and Perception of Roman Imperial Power: Proceedings of the Third Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire* (Roman Empire, c. 200 B.C.-A.D. 476), (Netherlands: J.C. Gieben Publisher, 2003), 22.

⁸⁵ These reverse types begin to appear on Faustina the Younger's coinage in 161, with depictions of *Fecunditas* holding two babies (*RIC* 3.678) and another reverse type showing her cradling two infants standing with two additional children (*RIC* 3.676). The advertisement of Faustina's maternity and children were critical in legitimizing Marcus Aurelius's claim to the *principate* while also guaranteeing his successor's legitimacy.

⁸⁶ Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 4.

ambitions. Inscriptions erected by the imperial administration about the empresses will also be discussed in this chapter.

The second chapter, “Responses to Imperial Propaganda,” reviews inscriptions erected by the Imperial *domus*, civic populations, and military groups in honor of the three empresses, either individually or, more often, in family groups. These inscriptions offer insights into relationships between the Palace and the emperor’s subjects. Special attention will be given to imperial titulature used in addressing the imperial wives, as well as the medium on which they exist, their locations, and the frequency of inscriptions erected during their husbands’ reign. Other subjects celebrated imperial mothers as *Mater Castrorum*, *Senatus*, and *Patriae* long after emperors had ceased endowing the title on their wives. This suggests that subjects of the emperor found something worthwhile in the empresses’ metaphorical motherhood titles, particularly the *Mater Castrorum* title and its suggested support of the military. This chapter uses the inscriptions database to visualize and quantify the inscriptions of Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa and Galeria Valeria.

The third and final chapter of this dissertation, “Detecting the Feminine Voice,” investigates evidence of girls and adult women’s responses to imperial propaganda by examining artifacts that have largely been overlooked by earlier studies. These include cameos, seals, and jewelry made from or inspired by imperial coinage. I explore the extent to which imperial women were seen as role models for girls and women through the adoption of imperial hairstyles or their likeness in figurines. I will also consider inscriptions erected by elite women that seem to model the empresses’ euergetism. The evidence for feminine responses to propaganda, specifically jewelry, dolls, and hairstyles may constitute feminine responses to dynastic propaganda, or they may have been colored by elite male perspectives as (possible)

commissioners of the artifacts. These personal objects give us insight into the personal history of the possessor. For these reasons, I consider what the possession of such items can communicate about the self-presentation of the owner.

Taken together, these chapters will demonstrate the outlines of the history of succession ideologies from the late second to the early fourth century. By employing a variety of material evidence with literary sources, the narrative of this history aspires to weave together the conversations about succession carried on in public and private by a wide variety of voices. People from all walks of life, it seems, had something to say about the empresses. If only we could detect what the empresses might say about their experiences embodying the empire.

CHAPTER 1: DYNASTIC PROPAGANDA

This chapter explores how emperors employed the images of Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa, and Galeria Valeria in official media, particularly in terms of legitimating themselves and promoting their successors. Though coinage will be the primary medium under investigation, coins were not the only way an emperor communicated with his subjects; he also employed speeches, decrees, state-sponsored art, and architecture. Several emperors, including Severus and Caracalla, even wrote autobiographies, but these are inaccessible, either fragmentary or non-extant.

Official titulature was one way in which emperors sought to control the narratives of their reigns. Coinage and imperial inscriptions promoted imperial titulature and in its proper order.⁸⁷ It forced those who addressed them to recognize their authority before they gave voice to their requests or complaints. Emperors also sought to control the narratives of their own reigns by publishing autobiographies; indeed, Severus' *omina imperii* was an excerpt from the emperor's autobiography. Herodian reports that while Severus was marching towards Pescennius Niger, he made several stops along the way and recounted his dreams, in which many historians and poets took as omens and made careers writing about his life (Hdn. 2.15.6). Indeed, Cassius Dio admitted that he too wrote of Severus' dreams and even received complimentary acknowledgements from the emperor himself (Cass. Dio 73(72).23.1). Dio wrote about the

⁸⁷ See page 23 of the Introduction.

dreams to enhance Severus' chances of becoming emperor (Cass. Dio 73(72).23.2). Herodian and Dio wrote contemporaneously under Septimius Severus and each provided a unique perspective on his reign, as an observer and Senator. As discussed in the Introduction, third century literary sources hardly survive and the ones that do are rendered suspect by the authors' agendas. Without these narratives, imperial coinage and inscriptions are our best hope for reconstructing the emperor's side of the story.

Succession ideologies competed with each other in the second century. Senators enthusiastically promoted adoptive succession and encouraged emperors to select their successors from the Senate (Plin. *Pan.* 7; Tac. *Hist.* 1.13-16). The Antonines countered the adopted succession ideology by using family metaphors and Faustina's image and likeness to legitimate Commodus as Marcus Aurelius' successor. Septimius Severus also employed this strategy on his wife's coinage as well. Faustina and Julia Domna appeared in domestic scenes that offered subjects an intimate glance inside the imperial *domus* and invited subjects likewise to conceive of their relationship with the emperor in familial terms. The appearance of empresses on coinage and in state media served to legitimate the current emperor and promised a peaceful inherited succession.⁸⁸ Empresses appear both on the reverses of their husbands' and sons' coinages as well as in their own issues, the obverses of which feature the empress' profile and titles. It is unclear how much input the empress had in the production of her portraits, but they were determined by the imperial family or someone connected to the emperor.⁸⁹ My impression after analyzing the data before me is the empress would have posed for the portrait and approved of a model that was used in state art, but without more definitive evidence, my impression is really only that, an impression. I will therefore focus on the reverse types of imperial coinage

⁸⁸ Horster, "The Emperor's Family on Coins (Third Century)," 292.

⁸⁹ Peter Stewart, *The Social History of Roman Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 103.

which, when taken together provides an outline of an emperors' narrative of his own reign. The varying legends and types allowed even the illiterate to achieve a basic understanding of the different messages, agenda and virtues promoted by the emperor and his dynasty.⁹⁰

There were three major succession ideologies in the late second and third century: inherited succession, imperial adoption, and military victories. Emperors with dynastic ambitions confronted a competing model of selecting emperors. Since Nerva adopted Trajan, senatorial authors promoted adoptive succession ideology because they were the best statesmen with civil relationship with the Senate (Plin. *Pan.* 7; Tac. *Hist.* 1.13-16). Starting with Faustina the Younger, emperors like Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus employed images of wives and children to encourage subjects to become emotionally invested in the emperor's family. They also employed the *Mater Castrorum* title, which claimed the military as the "adopted" son of the empress and suggested that the soldiers owed filial piety to the imperial family. These emperors employed the images of the empresses and family metaphor to counter the adopted succession ideology that some senators preferred while inviting a deeper connection and loyalty to the emperor. Initially, subjects did not respond visibly to the emperors' family propaganda, but by the time that Severus defeated his rivals and established himself on the throne securely, subjects began to respond warmly to Julia Domna in dynastic propaganda.

Julia Domna was publicized in a similar manner in order to legitimate Caracalla and Geta as Septimius Severus' successors. The "maternal megalomania" that characterized Julia Domna's coinage was not extended to Otacilia Severa and Galeria Valeria.⁹¹ Julia Domna's coinage undergoes three phases during the reigns of Septimius Severus and Caracalla. The first

⁹⁰ Olivier Hekster, "Coins and Messages: Audience Targeting on Coins of Different Denominations?," in *The Representations and Perception of Roman Imperial Power: Proceedings of the Third Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire* (Roman Empire, c. 200 B.C.-A.D. 476) (Netherlands: J.C. Gieben Publisher, 2003), 22.

⁹¹ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 5. See also page 6 of the Introduction.

phase of her coins focused on legitimating Septimius Severus' self-adoption into the Aurelian house which featured many reverse types issued for Faustina the Younger. The second phase of the empress' coins mainly concentrated on the succession of Caracalla and Geta as the future emperors. The third phase of Julia Domna's coins is marked by reign of Caracalla. This phase, the empress' reverse types downplay her role in her son's administration and the dynastic propaganda of the later emperor.

In the aftermath of the death of Severus Alexander and Julia Mamaea, Otacilia Severa's reverse types steered clear of metaphorical motherhood awarded to earlier empresses and mainly focused on her wifely and motherly virtues that guaranteed the legitimacy of Philip II as successor. Galeria Valeria was the only Tetrarchic woman to receive the Augusta title or appear on coinage. She received the title in 308, and her identical coin types were produced in mints controlled by her husband Galerius, and his co-rulers, Maximinus Daia, and Licinius. The legends on the coins do not specify Galeria Valeria's relationship to any of the Tetrarchs, even her father. This lack of specificity is in line with Tetrarch's abstract portrait style in which, according to Michael Kulikowski, "One is meant to see a single, imperial power, omnipresent and united against all enemies."⁹² Minted beside the types for Galerius and the other Tetrarchs, Valeria's appearance gives the impression of a uncomplicated dynastic succession. Evidence that the dynastic succession ideology was still potent amongst subjects are the four inscriptions that mention Galeria Valeria, each endowing her with the unofficial title, Mater Castrorum. Maximinius Daia, Licinius, and Galeria all seem to be aware of the potency of the empress' image to legitimate successors; it was for that reason Daia offered marriage, which she rejected,

⁹² Michael Kulikowski, *The Triumph of Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 199.

and it was why she was executed after she was unwilling “to yield to Licinius what she had denied to Daia, the whole inheritance of her husband” (Lactant. *De mort. per.* 51).

Their husbands used different tactics, but ultimately, each employed his wife’s images to legitimate themselves and smooth dynastic succession. The imperial mints issued multiple reverse types for imperial wives. Perhaps not surprisingly, motherhood was the prevailing theme in Julia Domna’s and Otacilia Severa’s coin types. This was not a theme in Galeria Valeria’s types whose reverse types were limited to Venus Victrix. Reverse legends featuring virtues such as *pietas*, *felicitas*, and *concordia* proclaimed the empress’s role as a wife and mother, the guarantor of domestic harmony. The *pubicitia* reverse type invited a sort of public surveillance over her body and sexual behavior. If the wife/mother did not maintain her chastity or devotion to her *domus*, then the successor’s legitimacy—which was based upon legal inheritance and family legacy—was destroyed. Depictions of maternal and domestic deities like Juno, Venus, and Vesta, combined with sloganeering legends, were visible expressions that bespoke the legitimacy of the dynasty.⁹³ Hairstyle is a particularly recognizable aspect of portrait types that was subject to change and is useful in dating once a relative chronology can be worked out.⁹⁴

Faustina the Younger was the first empress to be named Mater Castrorum, a title which appeared to grant them maternal purview over the military.⁹⁵ At the death of her husband, Julia Domna received titles that extended this metaphorical motherhood to other state institutions, including the Senate and the Patria. Like the Mater Castrorum title, the Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae titles suggest that the Senate and the Empire “adopted” themselves as her children.

⁹³ Marietta Horster, “The Emperor’s Family on Coins (Third Century): Ideology of Stability in Times of Unrest,” in *Crises in Empire: Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire, Nijmegen*, eds. Olivier Hekster, Gerda de Kleijn, and Danielle Slootjes (Boston: BRILL, 2007), 299.

⁹⁴ Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen*.

⁹⁵ Officially awarded the title were Faustina the Younger, Julia Domna, and Julia Mamaea. Those who were unofficially awarded the title were Julia Maesa, Otacilia Severa, Herennia Etruscilla, Cornelia Salonina, Ulpia Severina, Magnia Urbica, and Galeria Valeria. I cover this more in Chapter 2.

Despite the similar sound of these titles, however, they were initiated by different agent, under very different circumstances, and designed to accomplish very different ends. Furthermore, subject populations ignored official usage of the titles and used them whenever they wished. How subject dedicants interpreted these titles will be addressed in Chapter Two.

Family Metaphors to Describe Political Relationships

The emperors strategically employed motherhood rather than fatherhood in familial metaphors to describe the relationship between the imperial family and state institutions. Mothers were used rather than fathers to express the relationship between the emperor and these populations because it was a less heavy-handed way to encourage subjects to embrace the emperor and his dynasty. The two exceptions to the rule are the *Pater Castrorum* and *Pater Patriae* titles. The *Pater Patriae* title was developed early and conferred to Romulus (Liv. 1.16.3; Cic. *Div.* 1.3) and later Marcus Furius Camillus for leading Rome's recovery after its capture by the Gauls where he was proclaimed "Romulus and father of his country and a second founder of the city" (Liv. 5.49.7).⁹⁶ Other recipients include Cicero who was awarded the title by the Senate for suppressing the Catilinarian conspiracy (Cic. *Phil.* 2.12; Plut. *Cic.* 23.6; Plin. *Nat.* 7.117), Julius Caesar after the Battle of Munda (App. *BC* 2.106; Cass. Dio 44.4.4; Suet. *Jul.* 76,85), and Augustus during the celebration of the Augustan Forum (*RG* 35).⁹⁷

The *Mater Patriae* title was initially proposed for Livia after the death of Augustus, but Tiberius refused it for her. Tiberius rejected giving her the title because he was allegedly jealous of her notoriety and influence (Cass. Dio 57.12.4-6). The *Mater Patriae* title never appeared on

⁹⁶ Livy, *History of Rome. Books V-VII*, trans. B. O. Foster (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 167.

⁹⁷ Augustus initially refused the title but later accepted it (*RG* 5; Suet. *Aug.* 58.1; Cass. Dio 55.10.10).

coinage for imperial women before the Senate awarded it to Julia Domna after the death of Septimius Severus in 211.⁹⁸

Suetonius reported that Caligula called himself *Pater Castrorum* and considered it evidence of the emperor's descent into madness (Suet. *Cal.* 22). In order to avoid associations with Caligula's acting as a tyrant, emperors more often described their relationship with soldiers as *comilites*, fellow soldiers, or, perhaps, because of the *Mater Castrorum* title, as brothers, like Commodus and Caracalla reportedly did (Hdn. 1.5; 4.7-8). Perhaps, because of Caligula's example, later emperors chose not to employ the title. It became conventional to offer each new emperor the title at his elevation, but according to Kienast, it was not uncommon through the third century for the emperor to initially reject the title and accept it later as did Elagabalus and Macrinus.⁹⁹

Faustina in Marcus Aurelius' Advertisement

Scholars widely acknowledge that Julia Domna's publicity was modelled after Faustina Minor's, but in general, they have not noted the competing ideologies as work under the last of the "Good Emperors," as Gibbon dubbed them, nor Faustina's role in promoting dynastic succession.¹⁰⁰ As the daughter of one emperor, wife to another, and mother of a third, Faustina Minor was widely promoted and celebrated on imperial coinage. She first appeared on her own obverses as the daughter of Antoninus Pius while still an unmarried maiden.¹⁰¹ She was married

⁹⁸ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 134.

⁹⁹ Kienast, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, 27-8.

¹⁰⁰ Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1827), 93; Baharal, Lusnia, Levick. Fittschen on Faustina's changing image on numismatic types to signal to subjects the birth of children, especially male children. Langford as an exception to this general rule.

¹⁰¹ Harold Mattingly and Edward A. Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage Vol. III. Antoninus Pius to Commodus*, (London: British Museum, 1930), 92-95.

to Marcus Aurelius in 145, an event that was advertised on her husband's reverse types as a *Vota Publica*, a public vow (Figure 4).¹⁰² The marriage of Faustina to Marcus Aurelius legitimated Marcus as the son-in-law of Antoninus Pius, and was thus a public and affair with important implications for the state.¹⁰³ She appears again on her own obverse as Augusta in 147 after the birth of their first daughter.¹⁰⁴ From 161 and the birth of Commodus and his twin Titus, Faustina's reverse types allowed subjects an unprecedented and intimate glance into the imperial palace. One of the several reverse types depicted the empress playing with her children (Figure 5), and another featured her two twin boys playing on the throne (Figure 6).¹⁰⁵ In others, she cradles two infants while surrounded by two older children (Figure 7).¹⁰⁶

Faustina's and Marcus' reverse types encouraged the viewer to think of himself/herself as part of the imperial *domus*, privy to the most private family moments. These reverse types encouraged subjects to identify themselves as intimates of the imperial family, and thus become emotionally invested in the empress and his children. Marcus had very good reason for employing Faustina in this way.

For nearly 50 years, Roman emperors had been adopted from the ranks of the Senate, selected as grown men with their own impressive accomplishments. Faustina marked a transition from adopted succession back to dynastic succession; she was the first imperial wife to produce male offspring in nearly a century, a fact that Marcus widely celebrated on imperial coinage.¹⁰⁷ These reverse types were designed to convince subjects to accept Commodus as the legitimate heir of the *principate*. Just as advertising his marriage to Faustina legitimized Marcus' rise to

¹⁰² Figure 4: *RIC 3.434 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.ant.434*

¹⁰³ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 33.

¹⁰⁴ Kienast, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, 141.

¹⁰⁵ Figure 5: *RIC 3.679 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.679*

Figure 6: *RIC 3.712 numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.49236*

¹⁰⁶ Figure 7: *RIC 3.676 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.676*

¹⁰⁷ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 33.

Caesar and his succession of Antoninus Pius, so too did celebrating Faustina's maternity guarantee a smooth succession for Commodus.¹⁰⁸ It made clear to subjects the connection between Marcus and Commodus and encouraged them to relate to and identify with the future princeps. As we will see, other, later emperors seeking to found dynasties similarly promoted their wives and heirs on coinage. The motherhood of these imperial wives was useful of celebrating in state media, particularly on coinage.

Faustina was the first empress to be hailed as *Mater Castrorum*. Cassius Dio and the author of the *Historia Augusta* mention the title but are vague or disagree concerning the circumstances under which she received the title, who granted it, and what precisely it meant. Dio mentions the title in the same breath as Marcus' Rain Miracle. In the midst of a battle with the Quadi, a Germanic tribe, the Romans found themselves outnumbered, surrounded, exhausted, and dehydrated (Cass. Dio 72(71).8.2-3). As if by divine intervention, the weather suddenly changed, and it began to rain heavily, lightning striking the battlefield, in what Cassius Dio describes as "water and fire descending from the sky" (Cass Dio. 72(71).8.4;10.3). The Roman soldiers vigorously drank rainwater while lightning struck down their enemies. The troops then hailed Marcus Aurelius as imperator for the seventh time, an honor that he uncharacteristically did not wait for the Senate to approve, and Faustina received the title of Mater Castrorum (Cass Dio. 72(71).10.7).

The author of the *Historia Augusta*, however, claims that Marcus Aurelius called his wife the Mater Castrorum because she accompanied him on his summer military campaigns, though which campaign and which year is left unspecified (*HA Marc.* 26.8). He mentions Faustina's Mater Castrorum title at the same time as the notice of her death in the village of Halala (*HA*

¹⁰⁸ As defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary, I employ maternity to mean the qualities and state of (being) a mother. Roman mothers were celebrated for their maternity based on their chastity, pudor, fecundity, and offspring.

Marc. 26.4). Neither source explains at whose impetus the title was awarded, whether the emperor's or the troops. The author of the *Historia Augusta* suggests that Marcus was the one to come up with the title since Faustina accompanied him on the summer campaigns. But if the author can be trusted on this detail, he is unreliable regarding the timing of the title. They mention the title at the empress' death, but she was already named *Mater Castrorum* in reverse types issued during her lifetime (Figure 8).¹⁰⁹

Scholars have not carefully examined who awarded the title, its precise nature, or the motivations behind its award; some have assumed that it was awarded by the troops and was indicative of a familial like relationship.¹¹⁰ According to Langford's analysis of coin hoard evidence, however, the title seems to have been aimed at civic populations and not the troops. She suggested that the title's appearance around the revolt of Avidius Cassius was likely designed to reassure civilian populations that they need not fear a civil war over succession since the military owed its allegiance to the imperial *domus*.¹¹¹ After her death, the empress continued to advertised with her *Mater Castrorum* title as *Diva Faustina* (Figure 9).¹¹² This suggests that her *Mater Castrorum* title was useful in dynastic succession even after her death because it promised an uncontested succession while legitimizing Commodus as heir.

¹⁰⁹ Figure 8: *RIC* 3.1659 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.1659

¹¹⁰ For a full review of the literature, see Julie Langford and Christina Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum: A History of Imperial Women and Succession Ideology" (forthcoming).

¹¹¹ The connection between the title and the revolt of Avidius Cassius was explored and rejected by M. T. Boatwright, "Faustina the Younger: 'Mater Castrorum,'" in *Les Femmes Antiques entre Sphère Privée et Sphère Publique: Actes du Diplôme d'Etudes Avancées*, (Universités de Lausanne et Neuchâtel: Peter Lang, 2003), 249–68; but she ultimately accepted dating that we rejected. B. Levick, *Julia Domna: Syrian Empress*, (Routledge: New York, 2007) and Boatwright both sensed more than proved the connection between dynasty and the *Mater Castrorum* title; Julie Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 35 suggested that the title was meant as a deterrent to any would-be rivals for the throne; Julie Langford and Christina Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum: A History of Imperial Women and Succession Ideology" (forthcoming), 3.

¹¹² Figure 9: *RIC* 3.751-3 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.751

Phase 1: Legitimizing Severus 193-196

There are three distinct phases of Julia Domna's advertisement in the reigns of Septimius Severus and Caracalla. Phase 1 covers the early years of Severus' reign, when imperial propaganda focused on the Severan-Antonine heritage and legitimating himself as emperor. In this section, I consider how imperial propaganda emphasized the Severan-Antonine connections on Julia Domna's coinage. Early issues of the empress' coinage harken back to Faustina the Younger's in order to legitimate Severus' self-adoption.

The second woman to receive the *Mater Castrorum* title was Julia Domna, wife of L. Septimius Severus. In the context of her husband's reign, her title served to connect Severus to the Antonines and thus legitimize himself and his sons as his successors. After the assassinations of Commodus in 192 and then of Pertinax in 193, Severus was raised to the purple by his Pannonian legions. He was one of three rivals for the throne, but the first to reach Rome, where the Senate confirmed him as emperor and Julia Domna received the title of Augusta. Severus faced two challengers to his position at this point: Clodius Albinus, the governor of Britain, and Pescennius Niger, governor of Syria. He enlisted Albinus as his Caesar, which allowed him to turn his full attention towards Niger (193-5) (Hdn. 2.15.1-3). After defeating Niger in 195, Severus began to undermine Albinus' position as Caesar while fortifying his own claims to the throne (Hdn. 3.5.2-4; *HA Sev.* 10.1-2).

It was in this period leading to Severus' showdown with Albinus that he began to advertise the connections between himself and Marcus Aurelius' family in order to legitimate himself, promote his sons as successors, and erode the position of Clodius Albinus.¹¹³ Severus

¹¹³ Severus advertised his adoption into the Antonines on coinage dating to 195/6 (*RIC* 4a.65-66, 99). For more information, Z. Rubin, *Civil War Propaganda and Historiography*. (Bruxelle: Latomus, 1980); D. Baharal,

enhanced his eldest son's legitimacy by changing his name from Lucius Septimius Bassianus to his adoptive grandfather's name, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, aka Caracalla (*HA. Sev.* 10.3-6). In another rebuke to Albinus, Severus elevated Caracalla to Caesar, thus eliminating Albinus and revealing his dynastic ambitions (*HA. Sev.* 10.3). Julia Domna was awarded the title of *Mater Castrorum* on April 14, 195.¹¹⁴ Why Julia Domna was awarded the honorific and by whom is speculative. In a recent article, Langford and I suggested that Severus awarded the title to his wife for the same reason Marcus Aurelius awarded Faustina the title: to encourage the belief that the imperial *domus* and military shared an intimate familial relationship and thus guarantee a smooth dynastic succession. The title also served to bind Julia Domna to Faustina and the Severans to the Antonines.¹¹⁵

Around this time, Cassius Dio published a political pamphlet that described a series of dreams and omens that Severus purportedly experienced, his *omina imperii*. These dreams emphasized the deep connections between himself and the Antonines and offered evidenced to his subjects of divine sanction for Severus' reign (*Cass. Dio* 75.3.1). In one of these dreams, Faustina the Younger prepared the nuptial chamber in the Temple of Venus for Julia Domna and Severus before their wedding (*Cass. Dio* 75.3.1). Faustina takes the role of the *pronuba*, a role that was usually filled by the bride's mother.¹¹⁶ The dreams were useful in forging ties between the Antonines and Severans because they highlighted the familial connections that Severus needed for his legitimacy and his dynastic ambitions. The dream of Faustina preparing the bridal

"Portraits of the Emperor L. Septimius Severus (193-211 A.D.) as an Expression of His Propaganda," in *Latomus*, 48 (1989): 566-80; A. Birley, *Septimius Severus. The African Emperor* (London: Routledge, 1999); Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 17 n. 76.

¹¹⁴ Scholars have dated the title to April 14, 195 based on an inscription (*CIL* 8, 26498) and temple records in Arsinoe (*BGU* II 362.13). For more discussion on the dating of the title, see Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 36, n. 55.

¹¹⁵ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 36; Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 5.

¹¹⁶ See Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 69 and S. Treggiari, "Putting the Bride to Bed," in *EchCl* 38, no. 13 (1994): 311-31.

chamber for Severus and Domna strengthened the bonds between Faustina and Julia Domna beyond their shared titulature.¹¹⁷

Julia Domna's coins echo the maternal qualities and feminine virtues found on Faustina's coinage. The imperial mint issued coins displaying the empress's portrait on the obverse with the legend IVLIA DOMNA AVG, and reverse types featuring Fecunditas, Juno Regina, Mater Castrorum, Venus Victrix, Venus Genetrix, and Vesta. All of these types also appeared on Faustina's coinage. Fecunditas first appeared in 152 when Faustina gave birth to a son, T. Aelius Antoninus. It was also the first period in which the empress is not identified as the daughter of Pius.¹¹⁸ When the Fecunditas type appears on Julia Domna's coinage, it not only celebrates the empress's motherhood and fecundity, but it harkens back to Faustina's advertisement.¹¹⁹ On Julia Domna's reverse type, Fecunditas is seated holding a child at her breast with a second child standing in front raising its hand, a direct reference to the empress and her two sons (Figure 10).¹²⁰ Another reverse type illustrates Fecunditas holding an apple accompanied by Cupid standing right, a metaphorical reference to motherhood (Figure 11).¹²¹ Serving a similar purpose to Fecunditas, the Venus Genetrix reverse type not only connected Julia Domna to childbirth and motherhood, but also recalled Venus, the legendary mother of the Empire's foundational dynasty.¹²²

The Mater Castrorum types appear on Julia Domna's coinage from 195. These types recall Faustina's earlier Mater Castrorum types, depicting the empress sacrificing over an altar

¹¹⁷ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 69.

¹¹⁸ Fittschen identifies this as Type 5, from 152 and the birth of T. Aelius Antoninus. Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen*.

¹¹⁹ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coinage," 122.

¹²⁰ Figure 10: *RIC* 4a.844 numismatics.org/collection/1937.179.30801

¹²¹ Figure 11: *RIC* 4a. 537 numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.50314

¹²² Venus Genetrix is the legendary foundress of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

standing in front of three military standards (Figures 12 and 13).¹²³ Interestingly, the eastern mints that supplied payment for the troops did not issue any Mater Castrorum types.

Furthermore, these types are poorly represented in hoards found in military contexts.¹²⁴

According to the online Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire database, twelve examples of the Mater Castrorum type were found in the Reka Devnia hoard (modern Bulgaria) that contained 101,000 silver coins minted between 31 BCE to 245 CE.¹²⁵

Severus borrowed other reverse types and legends from Faustina's coinage to advertise his wife. To wit, Julia Domna's Venus Victrix (the Victorious) type is an exact duplicate of Faustina's reverse type under Marcus Aurelius (Figures 14 and 15).¹²⁶ Venus stands with drapery below her hips exposing her bare back with the reverse legend VENERI VICTR in the dative case. She is holding an apple in her extended right hand and a palm branch in her left and resting her elbow on a column. The apple and palm both symbolize peace and prosperity through military conquest, as does the title Victrix. According to Fittschen, Faustina's Venus Victrix types were developed sometime near the birth of Commodus and his twin Titus in 161.¹²⁷ The timing suggests that the Venus Victrix reverse types celebrated a "feminine victory" in which the baby is the spoils.¹²⁸ Venus Victrix differs from Venus Genetrix in that the former bespeaks

¹²³ Figure 12: *RIC* 3.1712 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.1712 and Figure 13: *RIC* 4a.880 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.4.ss.880_as

¹²⁴ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 36. For more information on the hoards and distribution of MC types, see Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 4-5.

¹²⁵ Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 5; For more hoard information: chre.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/hoard/3406

¹²⁶ Figure 14: *RIC* 3.723 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.723 Figure 15: *RIC* 4a.536 numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.50312

¹²⁷ K. Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina Minor und die Fecunditas Augustae* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), chapters 3-4.

¹²⁸ The Romans were familiar with Venus Victrix at least since 52 BCE when Pompey dedicated a temple to her "with some seating." The Theater of Pompey and the Temple of Venus Victrix was standing and in use in the third century. Venus was a patron goddess to famous conquerors like Sulla and Pompey for granting them military valor and success. For more, see Ann L. Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus: The Case of the Boscoreale Cups* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 23.

military victory while the latter connects Julia Domna to the foundress of the Roman state and to the Julio-Claudians.

Phase 2: Legitimizing Dynastic Succession 196-211

During the second phase of her coinage, Julia Domna was rewarded with additional titles and reverse types that highlighted her maternity and served to enhance the legitimacy of Caracalla and Geta as future emperors. This period begins with the promotion of Caracalla to Augustus and Geta to Caesar in 198. In 202, Caracalla married Plautilla, the daughter of Severus' friend and Praetorian Prefect Plautianus, and Severus celebrated the *decennalia*. Severus then celebrated the Secular Games in 204.¹²⁹ It is likely that the emperor announced these events to his subjects, since cities were expected to donate congratulatory crowns in response to the emperor's good news.

From Spring 208-210, the imperial family traveled to Britannia in order to punish the Caledonian chieftains for their frequent border raids. According to Herodian and Cassius Dio, the campaign was an opportunity for Severus to teach Caracalla and Geta some military experience and remove his sons from the partisanship and luxuries of Rome (Cass. Dio. 77(76).11.1, 14.2; Hdn. 3.14.1).¹³⁰ During the campaign, Geta stayed behind the lines with Julia Domna while Caracalla campaigned with Severus and the troops. With tensions brewing between the brothers, Severus likely took this as an opportunity to separate them with the intention that the distance would do the boys some good. Severus fell ill in 209 after the campaigning season, leaving Caracalla to lead the offensive in 210. As Caracalla was preparing

¹²⁹ For a more detailed discussion on Plautianus and his involvement with the imperial family, look to Chapter 2.

¹³⁰ A. Imrie, "The Emperor Caracalla: Common Enemy of Mankind" (Bloomsbury Academic: London), forthcoming (2021/2).

to raid the territories beyond the Antonine wall in late 210, Severus succumbed to his illness in Eburacum on February 4, 211. The new emperors, Caracalla and Geta, made hasty treaties and returned home with their mother carrying their father's ashes (Hdn. 3.15.6, 4.1.2).

During this period, Julia Domna's reverse types continue to echo themes found first in Faustina's coinage, but new types appear that advertise a new title for the empress, Mater Augg, and present her with motherly deities and Virtues. For example, Faustina the Younger and Julia Domna share a legend SAECVLI FELICITAS "the blessing of the generation." This legend initially appears in 161 to celebrate the birth of the twins Commodus and Antoninus and features a draped and ornamented throne on which are two babies play, Commodus and Antoninus, seated face to face, with stars sometimes above their heads (Figure 16).¹³¹ The implication is that the boys are the joy of a generation because they are future emperors. Similarly, Julia Domna's coinage promoted the succession of Caracalla and Geta as future emperors. A gold aureus minted under Severus bears his portrait on the obverse with his wife and two sons on the reverse (Figure 17).¹³² The type features Caracalla laureate on the left, Julia Domna front and center, and Geta bare headed on the right with the reverse legend of FELICITAS SAECVLI, "the blessings of the generation."¹³³ The empress's frontal portrait is an exceptional numismatic aesthetic that violates the invisible conventional boundary between the viewer and the imperial figure.¹³⁴ Her direct gaze demands the attention of the viewer as if to communicate in her own voice the message of the legend. The composition of the frontal portrait that is flanked by two profile portraits, one facing left, the other right, is aesthetically symmetrical with the main subject. The main subject is

¹³¹ Figure 16: *RIC* 3.1666 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.1666

¹³² Figure 17: *RIC* 4a.181b numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.50078

¹³³ The Felicitas Saeculi types recall Augustus' reverse types featuring Julia, Gaius, and Lucius, advertising them as his successors (*RIC* 1.405; *BMC* 109). Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 107.

¹³⁴ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 73-4.

flanked by two persons of lesser importance. Given that the central portrait is a woman, this pose imparts a remarkable amount of positional power to Julia Domna.

Insistent rumors regarding the tense relationship between the two brothers and in the imperial household threatened to undermine Severus' dynastic ambitions for his sons. As a result, *Pietas* and *Concordia* were also prevailing themes in the empress's coinage. These virtues offer official narratives of familial harmony and stability that were meant to ensure the longevity of the dynasty by counteracting rumors. The empress thus appeared as *Pietas* holding a box in her left hand, dropping incense on an altar with her other hand (Figure 18).¹³⁵ Her presence as peacemaker was likely designed to reassure subjects that there would be a peaceful transition and co-rulership between Caracalla and Geta after Severus. The imperial mint issued another *Pietas* type with *PIETATI AVGVSTAE*, "to the dutiful/ pious Augusta" as the reverse legend (Figure 19).¹³⁶ On the field is Julia Domna standing between Caracalla left in military garb with Septimius Severus togate, both men holding a globe. Julia Domna's reverse types presented a narrative of familial harmony within the Palace which was vital for a peaceful succession as well as for Severus' continued legitimacy. After all, if the emperor could not maintain stability within his household, how could he maintain control over his subjects? The empress's *pietas* types presented Julia Domna as a guarantor of family harmony and were likely designed to quell any fears and anxieties over the future succession of Severus' line.

Subject populations in the emperor's home town of Lepcis Magna echoed the numismatic themes of *pietas* and *concordia* in the quadrifrons arch erected for his visit.¹³⁷ The panel reliefs

¹³⁵ Figure 18: *RIC* 4a. 572 numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.51303

¹³⁶ Figure 19: *RIC* 4a.864 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.4.ss.864

¹³⁷ Natalie Boymel Kampen, "Between Public and Private: Women as Historical Subjects in Roman Art," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah Pomeroy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 224: The arch is a quadrifrons, a four-arch block decorated with mythological scenes, barbarian captives, victories, and celebrates the imperial family.

on the Leptis Magna arch depict the empress sacrificing beside the emperor, attended by soldiers, civilians, and attendants.¹³⁸ In another scene, the empress oversees the *dextrarum iunctio*, the clasping of right hands, between Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Geta (between them), and recalls the harmonious agreement of imperial family members, *concordia Augustorum*. Julia Domna's presence reinforces the idea that the *dextrarum iunctio* is both political and personal, as well as familial and dynastic.¹³⁹

Finally, there are nine *pudicitia* types of the veiled goddess resting her right hand on her breast and holding a scepter in the left *en face* (Figure 20).¹⁴⁰ This legend first appears on Sabina's coinage and then Faustina's when she was unmarried under Antoninus Pius and later under Marcus Aurelius (Figure 21).¹⁴¹ Like Faustina, Julia Domna was under intense public scrutiny because her sexual continence was the guarantor of her sons' lineage and legitimacy. These *pudicitia* types were probably issued around the time Plautianus accused the empress of infidelity and attacked her *pudicitia* (Cass. Dio 76(75).16.6-7). Charges against the empress and her chastity threatened the legitimacy and succession of Caracalla and Geta. To counter these allegations, the mint issued the new reverse types depicting the empress as Pudicitia. These types were likely issued for Faustina for the same reason, to ward off rumors of her infidelity so as to keep the succession pure. Ultimately, presenting the empress in this manner reinforced the integrity and legitimacy of the succession and preservation of the dynasty.¹⁴²

Spring 208 to February 211 marks the final phase of Severus' reign. In 209, when Geta was promoted to Augustus, Julia Domna received an unprecedented title, Mater Augustorum.

¹³⁸ Kampen, "Between Public and Private," 226.

¹³⁹ Kampen, "Between Public and Private," 231.

¹⁴⁰ Figure 20: RIC 4a.575 numismatics.org/collection/1935.117.497

¹⁴¹ Figure 21: RIC 3.708 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.708

¹⁴² Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 20.

Severus issued five reverse types with the legend MATER AVGG. The types feature the Magna Mater (Cybele) seated in a chariot drawn by four lions (Figure 22).¹⁴³ This reverse type first appears on Faustina's coinage under Marcus Aurelius (Figure 23).¹⁴⁴ The difference between the two empresses' types lies in the reverse legend itself. Faustina's reverse legend MATRI MAGNAE is in the dative, suggesting that the type honors the goddess. Julia Domna's legend is in the nominative case, indicating that the empress *was* in some way, Cybele.

Phase 2 covers the period after Severus' victory in the civil wars in which imperial propaganda focused on legitimating Caracalla and Geta as the future co-emperors. Julia Domna's coinage primarily focused on her maternal and feminine virtues. Reverse legends touted the empress's maternal qualities like *felicitas*, *pudicitia*, *pietas*, *laetitia*, and *hilaritas* which served to strengthen the legitimacy of her sons and suppress rumors that threatened to undermine the integrity of the dynasty. Julia Domna's association to maternal goddesses articulated her role within the imperial *domus* as queen-mother of the dynasty. Julia Domna was awarded the Mater Augustorum title to commemorate the ascension of Geta to co-Augustus, joining Caracalla and Severus. The empress' coinage, with a combination of reverse legends and iconography relating to motherhood and family, guaranteed the peace and prosperity of the dynasty, and a successful transition of power after Severus. Julia Domna's coins undergo one more phase in the period following Severus' death. In the third and final phase of Julia Domna's titlature, she receives the titles of Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae. The Senate awarded these titles to the empress in order to adopt itself into the imperial house. Additional titles, Pia and Felix, characterized her obverses after the death of Severus.

¹⁴³ Figure 22: *RIC* 4a.562 numismatics.org/collection/1955.191.22

¹⁴⁴ Figure 23: *RIC* 3.1663 numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.3.m_aur.1663

Phase 3: Legitimizing Caracalla 211-217

During the third phase of Julia Domna's coinage, mints discontinued a number of the empress' earlier reverse types and legends. The Mater Castrorum and Mater Augustorum titles recalled Severus' dynastic plans involving Caracalla and Geta and were thus an embarrassment after Geta's death. Instead, the empress' advertisement in coinage emphasized associations to motherly goddesses. Caracalla likely wanted to downplay his mother's role in his father's administration and focus on enhancing his own self-image as sole emperor.

Julia Domna received more unprecedented honors and titles than any other empress because she was essential in justifying Severus' usurpation and promoting the succession of Caracalla and Geta. The two Augusti returned to Rome with their mother bearing Severus' ashes early in 211. This was likely the moment that Domna was awarded a slew of new titles: Pia, Felix, Mater Senatus, and Mater Patriae.¹⁴⁵ The preferred order of the empress's new titulature was advertised on coinage as IVLIA AVGUSTA PIA FELIX MATER AVGG MAT SEN M PATR (Figure 24).¹⁴⁶ The Mater Castrorum title is dropped in the empress's official titulature and is no longer minted on coinage.¹⁴⁷ The title disappeared on official media, probably because it recalled Severus' failed succession plan and Geta's brutal slaying at the order of Caracalla (Cass. Dio 77(76).15.2).

Each new title emphasized Domna's duty to the state by maintaining harmony within the *domus* – Pia and Felix – but also by demanding her maternal attention to the state – Mater

¹⁴⁵ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 21; 134-6 provides a summary of scholarly opinions on the dating of Julia Domna's titles.

¹⁴⁶ Figure 24: *RIC* 4a.380-1 numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.51324

¹⁴⁷ While the Mater Castrorum no longer appears on official media, the same cannot be true of inscriptions dedicated by citizens and populations. I explore more of this in Chapter 2.

Senatus and Mater Patriae. The empress was awarded these new titles by the Senate thereby adopting *itself* into the family with the hopes that Julia Domna could prevent a civil war between the feuding brothers. The Senate did not adopt itself into the family for lineage and legitimacy as Severus did with the family of Marcus Aurelius. Instead, the Senate needed a powerful ally that would keep the brothers from one another's throats. The title was a demonstration that it, like the military (as advertised in the Mater Castrorum title), the Senate supported the empress in the elevation of her sons. In essence, the Senate capitulated its adopted succession ideology for a dynastic ideology. The titles did not stress the Senate's closeness to the family, but rather their support for the succession of Severus' sons. Julia Domna was the first empress to receive these titles and the timing of their award – immediately following the death of Severus – suggests that the Senate feared that her sons' animosity toward one another might devolve into civil war. The nature of the titles and epithets – maternal, devoted to family and state, and beloved of the gods – suggest that they felt it was now time for her to employ her influence to quell the discord between her sons.¹⁴⁸ Unfortunately, her attempts at easing tensions between Caracalla and Geta were in vain. Dio reports that on December 26, 211, Caracalla tricked his mother into hosting a meeting to negotiate a peace between himself and Geta. A centurion leapt from behind a tapestry at Caracalla's signal and slaughtered Geta as he clung to his mother's neck begging her to save him (Cass. Dio. 78.2.3; Hdn. 4.4.3; *HA M. Ant.* 2).¹⁴⁹

The period of 212-217 is one of intense renegotiation between Caracalla and the populations of the empire. At this time, Caracalla was preoccupied with campaigning and

¹⁴⁸ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 21.

¹⁴⁹ The reports of the assassination vary between authors. While Cassius Dio reports that a centurion leapt out at Caracalla's signal, the *Historia Augusta* states that Caracalla complained to the soldiers that Geta was conspiring against him and that they were sent to the palace to murder him. Herodian claims that both brothers were trying to kill each other by asking their cooks and cupbearers to deliver the poison (4.4.2). According to Herodian, tensions reached a breaking point and Caracalla stabbed Geta in his mother's arms.

visiting religious shrines, hoping to be cured of some unknown malady (Hdn. 4.7.1-2; *HA M. Ant.* 19.4-5).¹⁵⁰ Though the young emperor had spurned his father's purported deathbed advice to love his brother, he obeyed his exhortation to enrich the soldiers and scorn all the others (Cass. Dio. 77(76).15.3). Ultimately, as the situation changed inside the imperial *domus*, reverse types reflected the virtues the emperor was intent on communicating to the populace.¹⁵¹ Caracalla ceased advertising the *Mater Castrorum* and *Mater Augustorum* titles in official media and inscriptions. This was probably because they called attention to the dynastic plans Severus had laid for his two sons and Caracalla's culpability in Geta's death. Instead, the empress's reverse types now highlighted her association with the goddesses Diana, Luna, Juno, and Venus. The imperial mint under Caracalla issued *Diana Lucifera*, *Luna Lucifera*, *Matri Deum*, and *Venus Genetrix* reverse types.¹⁵²

The question why Julia Domna was associated with Diana and Luna Lucifera so late in her life is puzzling. These goddesses are best known for the assistance they provide mothers in childbirth. In this case, these types guaranteed the legitimacy of the heirs and ensured that the mother looked over them.¹⁵³ The *Matri Deum* types refer to Cybele, while the *Venus Genetrix* types probably refer to her as the foundress of the dynasty.¹⁵⁴ It is curious that the *Matri Deum* reverse types appear in the dative case rather than the nominative, suggesting that this particular type honors the goddess Cybele, rather than implying that the empress is Cybele.¹⁵⁵ Julia

¹⁵⁰ Clare Rowan, *Under Divine Auspices: Divine Ideology and the Visualisation of Imperial Power in the Severan Period* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 110-163.

¹⁵¹ Lusnia, "Julia Domna's Coins," 121.

¹⁵² Two *Luna Lucifera* (*RIC* 4.600), one *Venus Genetrix* (*RIC* 4a.605a), and three *Vesta* (*RIC* 4a.607 and 593) types were issued by the Senate.

¹⁵³ Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 7.

¹⁵⁴ Andrew Scott argues that Dio presented Julia Domna as the foundress of the dynasty in opposition to Severan and Caracalla propaganda. His description of the empress is colored by eastern stereotypes. For more, refer to Andrew G. Scott, "Cassius Dio's Julia Domna: Character Development and Narrative Function," in *TAPA* 147 (2017): 413-433.

¹⁵⁵ Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 4.

Domna's increased advertisement as Juno perhaps reflects this new direction in propaganda that played down her actual motherhood because it reminded subjects of Geta's murder and emphasized her role as a dowager empress.

Caracalla did not reign long before he too met his untimely demise. In 217 while on campaign, a soldier stabbed Caracalla to death, and the troops immediately declared Macrinus as the new emperor. The death of Severus, murder of Geta, and assassination of Caracalla left Julia Domna alone and distraught.¹⁵⁶ For Domna, a life without influence or luxuries was not worth living according to Dio.¹⁵⁷ He reports that the empress either died from starvation or from beating her breast in grief so hard that a tumor ruptured (Cass. Dio. 79(78).23).

In summary, as a usurper, Severus needed to validate his claim to power through the consensus and negotiation of imperial ideology with his subjects. Propaganda that highlighted the emperor's virtues, military accomplishments, and family fostered a loyalty between himself and his subjects and guaranteed a peaceful succession process. The empress was a critical element in this process. Employing dreams and reusing Faustina's titles and reverse types allowed Severus to more closely attach himself and his family to the Antonine dynasty through Julia Domna. Even as rumors of the feuding princes trickled out of the Palace, reverse types claimed harmony in the imperial family, likely in an attempt to reassure the populace that the empress was playing the role of peacemaker in the *domus* and that the state of affairs was less dire than the rumors insinuated. As we will see, it is significant that the titles Julia Domna received in her lifetime were never extended to post-Severan imperial women. The adopted and dynastic succession ideologies that characterized the late second and early third century yielded

¹⁵⁶ This is Dio's interpretation of the events. It is possible that the empress may have been distraught over the loss of her sons and husband.

¹⁵⁷ Dio commonly attributes this feeling to all women in the vicinity of power.

to a new normal in which men became emperors on the battlefield. Such men little reason to advertise their wives, unless they sought to found their own dynasties.

Late Severan Emperors and the Soldier Emperors

In the years following the deaths of Septimius Severus and Caracalla, Julia Domna's great nephews were catapulted to power thanks largely to the efforts of her sister, Julia Maesa and her two daughters, Julia Soemias and Julia Mamaea. Both had young sons whom Maesa worked quietly behind the scenes to place on the throne. She first promoted her grandson Bassianus (Elagabalus) to the troops in Syria as the illegitimate son of Caracalla and rightful heir to the throne. A series of questionable choices by Elagabalus led Maesa to switch her support to her other grandson, Severus Alexander as Caesar (Hdn. 5.5.1-10).¹⁵⁸ Not long afterwards, the Praetorian Guard slaughtered Elagabalus and his mother Julia Soemias, dragging their bodies through the streets and dumping them into the Tiber (Hdn. 5.8.9).

Severus Alexander was thirteen when he became emperor. Julia Maesa and Julia Mamaea stepped in as co-regents and effectively ruled in place of the young emperor (Cass. Dio 80.17.2; *HA Alex. Sev.* 63; Hdn. 6.9.8).¹⁵⁹ Maesa kept her Augusta title, and unofficially was *Mater Castrorum* and *Senatus*.¹⁶⁰ Mamaea also received the titles of Augusta and *Mater Augusti* in 222,

¹⁵⁸ Elagabalus opted to only wear silk clothing accessorized with gold embroidery and fine jewels, rather than the typical Roman garb (much to his grandmother's dismay) (*HA Heliogab.* 26; Hdn. 5.5.3-5). The emperor then sent a portrait of himself in his usual attire performing priestly duties, because he wanted the Senate and citizens to grow accustomed to seeing him in his usual manner (Hdn. 5.5.5-6). Cassius Dio reports that Elagabalus' most egregious offense was introducing his foreign gods to Rome (Cass. Dio. 80.11). Elagabalus is accused of spending large sums of money in the construction temples, altars, and sacrifices for his foreign religion (Hdn. 5.5.8).

¹⁵⁹ It appears that the authors of these texts did not have an issue with Severus Alexander as a ruler. In fact, they appear to have issues with Mamaea and her unrelenting control over the young emperor.

¹⁶⁰ An inscription located in Rome lists Julia Mamaea as the *Mater Castrorum* (Maesa and Mamaea ruled together for two years). Unlike Julia Soemias, Mamaea appears to have earned herself a higher profile under Maesa. An altar

the period in which Severus Alexander became emperor, and later Mater Castrorum in 224 after Maesa's death.¹⁶¹ Our main sources for these events complain of Julia Mamaea's greed, overbearing personality, domination of the emperor, and interference in imperial matters. Her domineering nature undermined her son's reputation both as a man and leader (Hdn. 6.1.5, 6.8.3, 6.9.4; *HA Alex. Sev.* 59.8; Zonar. 12.15.572).

Julia Mamaea and Severus Alexander met their demise and were executed under Maximinus' orders in 235. The emperor was only twenty-five at the time and died trembling in his mother's arms (Hdn. 6.9.6). Herodian states that the brutal treatment of the emperor and his mother was fired by Maximinus Thrax' charges that Mamaea controlled Alexander; her greed kept the soldiers from their just desserts, and Alexander behaved timidly and carelessly in the field (Hdn. 6.8-9). The memories of both were condemned as so many of the inscriptions formerly erected in their honor bear witness.¹⁶²

The title Mater Castrorum disappears from official media after Severus Alexander's reign. It is likely that Mamaea's – and perhaps Domna's – supposedly overbearing nature and interference in state affairs, and that Mamaea was killed deliberately along with Severus Alexander, left a bad taste in the mouths of the emperors who ruled after 235. Perhaps the Mater Castrorum title came to be associated with dominating empresses who emasculated their men. After 235, the only official inscriptions on which the title occurs are milestones, and it is debatable as to whether these should be categorized as official inscriptions at all.¹⁶³

erected in Rome by citizens of Pannonia Inferior, honored Maesa first, it limited her titles to Augusta and Avia Augusti while Mamaea was Augusta, Mater Augusti Nostri and Mater Castrorum (*AE* 2001, +219).

¹⁶¹ Mamaea received the Mater Castrorum honorific in 224, probably after Maesa passed. It is probable that there could not be more than one Mater Castrorum at a time, so Mamaea likely assumed the title after Maesa's death. For more, see Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 9.

¹⁶² A few examples: *CIL* 6, 36775; *CIL* 8, 26548; *CIL* 8, 14682

¹⁶³ For a full discussion concerning milestones and possibility that these were overseen by the imperial house, refer to chapter 2's section on Otacilia Severa.

In the decades following the end of the Severan dynasty, most emperors won their office on the battlefield rather than through inheritance or adoption, and most did not rule for very long. Maximinus Thrax was the first of the soldier emperors, with Numerian and Carinus being the last in 285. The prominence of imperial wives in official media declined precipitously under these emperors until it reached its nadir under Diocletian. Those emperors who sought to establish a dynasty, especially Philip the Arab, Trajan Decius, Gallienus, Aurelian, and Carinus continued to advertise the mothers of successors on coinage, but far less frequently and without the extravagant metaphorical motherhood of Faustina and the Severan women. Of the twenty-six emperors during this fifty-year period, only six advertised their wives on coinage, each with obvious dynastic ambitions.¹⁶⁴ Though the wives of the soldier emperors may well have had some influence in their husbands' administration, it was not advertised in official media. The last thing an aspiring emperor who founded his rule on *virtus* wanted was any suggestion that his wife had a role in gaining his power, or in ruling the empire. Nonetheless, various populations throughout the empire continued to award titles like Mater Castrorum, Mater Senatus, and Mater Patriae in dedicatory and honorific inscriptions to empresses whose sons were expected to succeed their fathers. I will explore this phenomenon in greater depth in the next chapter, but for now it is sufficient to note that the dedicants' use of these titles were more than enthusiastic expressions of loyalty to the emperor. They were pleas for the peaceful transfer of power.

¹⁶⁴ The exception is Aurelian and his wife Ulpia Severina. She is only known to us through inscriptions and coinage. Although the couple had a daughter, it is unclear whether Aurelian intended to found a dynasty. Ulpia Severina may have ruled the empire herself for a short period after Aurelian's death in 275. Christian Körner, "Aurelian (A.D. 270-275)," *De Imperatoribus Romanis: An Online Encyclopedia of Roman Rulers and Their Families*, accessed June 12, 2020.

Otacilia Severa: 244-249

Otacilia Severa’s maternal advertising in official media was modest compared to Julia Domna’s. Whereas Julia Domna’s coinage mainly focused on connections that legitimated Severus and his son through metaphorical motherhood titles that were used to “adopt” subject populations into the imperial *domus*. By contrast, Otacilia’s coinage concentrated on her actual maternal role and the celebration of Rome’s millennial anniversary which coincided with the Ludi Saeculares (Figure 25). Her advertisement centered on legitimating Philip’s dynasty and celebrating Philip II as Caesar and later co-Augustus.

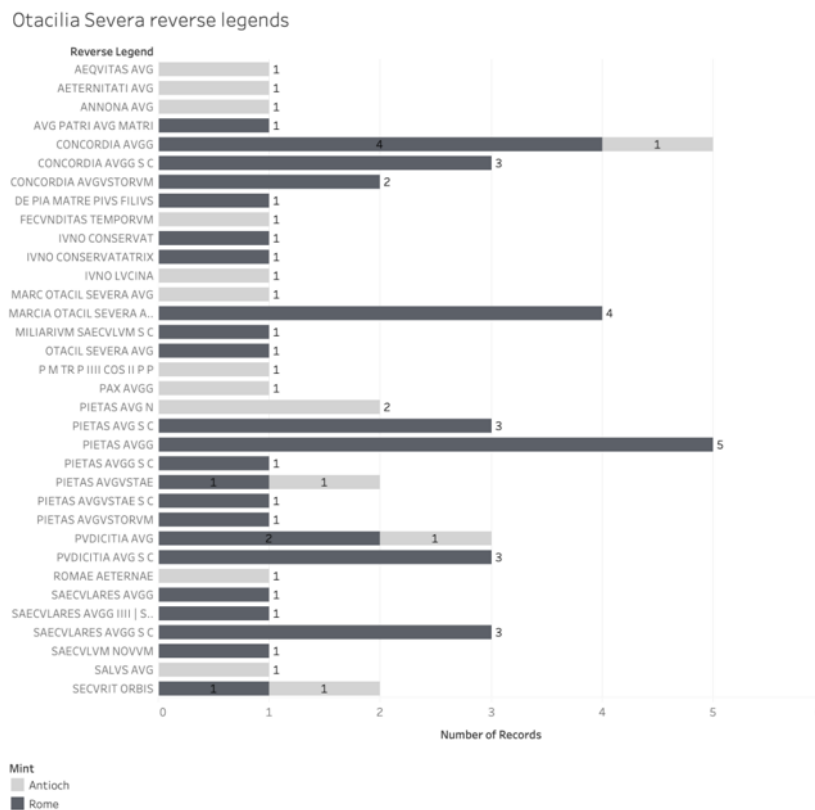


Figure 25. Otacilia Severa’s reverse legends

In late 244, almost ten years after Severus Alexander and Julia Mamaea were savagely murdered at the hands of their soldiers, Marcus Julius Philippus (Philip the Arab) was

proclaimed emperor. Late sources claim that Philip had served Gordian III as praetorian prefect, leading some to suspect that he plotted to overthrow the emperor (Eutr. 9.2; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 27).¹⁶⁵ Philip was married to Otacilia Severa in 238, some six years before he was raised to the purple. Very little is known about Otacilia or her origins before 244 besides that she was the mother of Philip's three children, the oldest of whom, Philip II, was about seven when he was raised to the position of Caesar. He was elevated to Augustus at ten in 247.

Otacilia's reverse types shed light on some of the major events and challenges in Philip's reign. Philip's first task as emperor was to negotiate a peace with the Sassanids, which he managed by conceding an enormous reparation payment. This treaty allowed him to return to Rome from Mesopotamia where he celebrated Rome's one thousandth anniversary with grandiose spectacles. To fund the games, Philip ceased paying reparations to the Sassanids and thus violated the peace treaty. In his brief tenure, Philip faced several revolts about which he complained before the Senate (Eutr. 9.3; Zonara. 12.18.584).

Otacilia's coinage reflects Philip's interests in establishing a dynasty through the advertisement of her maternity, the elevation of Philip II from Caesar to co-Augustus, and the celebration of Rome's millennial anniversary which coincided with the *Ludi Saeculares*. Notably, Philip chose not to honor Otacilia with titles that celebrated the empress's metaphorical motherhood such as *Mater Senatus*, *Mater Patriae*, or *Mater Castrorum*.¹⁶⁶ Instead, the empress was advertised with reverse types that were conventional compared to those types used for

¹⁶⁵ Zonaras provides more information on what led to Philip's ascension to the purple. Philip was appointed praetorian prefect under Gordian and sought to seize power for himself and inspired a military mutiny by withholding supplies (Zonar. 12.18).

¹⁶⁶ Employing Langford's methodology, Jenni Royce investigated Otacilia's imperial coinage and determined that the imperial administration no longer employed any of the titles Julia Domna had in coinage. Royce presented her findings at the 2013 Sunoikisis conference held in Washington, D.C. She examined the *Mater Castrorum* title for the wives of third century emperors: sunoikisis.org/surs/2013/04/27/matriarchal-marketing/

empresses from Faustina the Younger to Julia Mamaea. Philip used his wife's reverse types to promote his nascent dynasty by advertising her maternity and her maternal virtues.

Most prominent among Otacilia's coinage are the legends CONCORDIA, PIETAS, PVDICITIA, and SAECVLARES AVGG. Similarly to the *pudicitia* types employed for Faustina and Julia Domna, Otacilia's types advertised her sexual continence and thus served as a guarantee of the dynasty's integrity and Philip II's legitimacy. Otacilia's *pudicitia* type depicts the goddess personified seated on a throne holding a scepter. Nearly 37% of Otacilia's reverse types feature the legend CONCORDIA AVGG or AVG, which suggest that the empress maintained domestic harmony. The PIETAS legend varies between the modifiers AVG, AVGG, AVGVSTAE, and AVGVSTORVM. Pietas stands facing left raising her right hand, sometimes over an altar, and usually holding a box of perfume in her left hand (Figure 26).¹⁶⁷ The plural form of the legend, PIETAS AVGG, appears in 248 when Philip II was promoted to Augustus (Figure 27).¹⁶⁸

The PIETAS AVG types minted for Julia Domna take on new meaning in Otacilia's coinage. Julia Domna's reverse types with the PIETAS AVGG legend were minted to ensure the peaceful transition of power after Septimius Severus' reign. The AVG types of Otacilia Severa suggest that these were minted under the authority of Philip I until Philip II's promotion to Augustus. These were presumably minted to guarantee the stability of Philip's sole reign after he seized the throne from Gordian III. On a bronze medallion, Otacilia's portrait occupies the obverse. Both Philips appear on the reverse with the legend PIETAS AVGVSTORVM/ III ET II COSS, indicating that this medallion was produced under the joint rule of Philip and Philip II. With the exception of the medallion, all of Otacilia's Pietas types remained uniform, depicting

¹⁶⁷ Figure 26: *RIC* 4c.130 numismatics.org/collection/1935.117.193

¹⁶⁸ Figure 27: *RIC* 4c.115 numismatics.org/collection/1987.26.232

Pietas making a sacrifice. Unlike Julia Domna and her Mater Augustorum types, Philip was probably trying to discourage subjects from confusing his wife for a virtue or goddess. These new Pietas Augustorum types advertised the peaceful rule of the co-emperors, promoted dynastic stability and did so without implying the empress had overreaching tendencies.

The imperial mint issued types with the legend SAECVLARES AVGG to celebrate the millennial anniversary of Rome's legendary founding in 753 BCE. These celebratory types were issued for Philip I, Otacilia, and Philip II and feature architectural columns that decorate the reverse field before which stand exotic animals that had been imported to entertain the masses (Figures 28 & 29).¹⁶⁹

Philip shaped his message for his audience. The mint in Antioch functioned under Philip to pay the troops that were campaigning against the Sassanids. The eastern mint largely ignored minting dynastic coinage featuring the empress. As they had done under Septimius Severus, the eastern mints issued coinage that was intended to pay the troops campaigning with him in Persia. These reverse types were designed to appeal to the troops and promoting Philip as imperator (Figure 30).¹⁷⁰

Zonaras relates that while Philip was complaining to the Senate about the threats to his rule, Decius, a senator and consul, told the emperor that the soldiers who raised the usurpers would likely murder them as well. Apparently impressed by Decius, Philip sent him north to squash a revolt of the Pannonian and Moesian legions (Zonar. 12.19.584). Upon his arrival and despite his protests, the troops immediately raised Decius to the purple. Philip and Decius met at

¹⁶⁹ Figure 28: *RIC* 4c.200a numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.18448

Figure 29: *RIC* 4c.202b numismatics.org/collection/1923.150.46

Harold Mattingly, Edward A. Sydenham, C. H. V. Sutherland. *Roman Imperial Coinage Vol. IV Part 3. Gordian III to Uranian Antoninus*, (London: British Museum, 1936), 58; 62.

¹⁷⁰ Figure 30: *RIC* 4c.254 numismatics.org/collection/1923.151.21

the Battle of Verona in 249, where Philip was killed. According to some accounts, Philip II was murdered in the aftermath of the battle by the Praetorian Guard as the 12 year old boy cowered in the arms of his mother, reminiscent of Geta dying in Julia Domna's arms (Cass. Dio 78(77).2.3–6; 80.20.2-3). Otacilia lived in obscurity following the death of her husband and child. Both Philips received *damnationes* and Otacilia's images and inscriptions were also marred, though it is unclear whether her memory was also condemned or if she was simply the victim of collateral damage incurred from the destruction of her husband's and son's images and names.¹⁷¹

The soldier emperors leading up to Diocletian continued the practice of advertising their wives for dynastic purposes, but not to the extent that Septimius Severus did with Julia Domna, since most did not rule long enough to establish the extensive propaganda program that Severus employed.¹⁷² Martial prowess and military support were now the chief qualifications to struggle for the purple. In order to have dynastic aspirations, a soldier emperor not only needed the support of the military, but most importantly an heir, or at least a wife who could provide one. The next major turning point in the evolution of succession ideology was the Tetrarchy and Diocletian.

Galeria Valeria and Venus Victrix: 308-311

For the two years that Carinus ruled (283-85), his wife Magnia Urbica was still celebrated as Mater Castrorum on inscriptions, even when the title was no longer presented on

¹⁷¹ An inscription dedicated by the municipal Porolissum in Dacia (modern Romania) is marred with erasures from the *damnationes memoriae* (ILD 671 = AE 1944, 54).

¹⁷² The Senate continued the practice of confirming emperors, but they lost considerable power and influence under Septimius Severus. He prioritized the army and their loyalty before the Senators. In the third century, soldier emperors, from Maximinus Thrax onwards, understood that their power and legitimacy rested with the military, resulting in the decline of Senatorial. Gallienus stripped senators of their power, particularly in commanding armies, opting for equestrians (Aur. Vic. Caes. 33.31–34; Southern, *The Roman Empire*, 132; 418-9).

coinage.¹⁷³ The armies proclaimed Diocletian emperor after the demise of Carinus in 285. He took immediate steps to bring the Roman armies back under his control by reorganizing the army and government.¹⁷⁴ Diocletian realized that the empire was too large for a single overseer to preserve an institution on the brink of economic and political collapse. To alleviate the burden, he appointed Maximian as *nobilissimus Caesar* of the western half of the empire in 285 while he ruled as Augustus in the East. Maximian was promoted to co-Augustus a year later. Diocletian then founded the Tetrarchy, the college of four emperors, when he adopted two more co-emperors for each Augustus. Constantius Chlorus served as Maximian's Caesar in the west, while Galerius served as Caesar of the eastern half under Diocletian.

The Tetrarchy was constructed to combat the threats on the borders of the empire through the selection of co-emperors of military rank. In such a system, excellence in battle now played a greater role than did imperial women as agents of succession.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, the agreements between the Tetrarchs technically eliminated the role of women in succession, but still the Tetrarch continued to use women in order to strengthen bonds between each Augustus and his Caesar. Thus, Diocletian and Maximian gave their daughters, Galeria Valeria and Theodora, in marriage to their junior colleagues, Galerius and Constantius Chlorus. Intermarriage between the tetrarchs not only unified them, but it deterred potential suitors from trying to worm their way into the imperial college by marrying the daughters of the Augusti. Tetrarchic women of the first

¹⁷³ *CIL* 11, 5168, *CIL* 2, 3394 (p 952), *CIL* 8, 2384.

¹⁷⁴ Under Diocletian governors were no longer selected from a body of senators. Instead, governors (*praeses*) were selected from the equestrian ranks. For more, see Roger Rees, *Diocletian and the Tetrarchy: Debates and Documents in Ancient History*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 25; Timothy David Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982), 33; Stephen Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, (New York: Methuen, Inc., 1985), 102-115.

¹⁷⁵ C. H. Sutherland and R. A. G. Carson, *Roman Imperial Coinage Vol. VI From Diocletian's Reform (A.D. 294) to the Death of Maximinus (A.D. 313)*, (London: British Museum, 1936), 9.

generation were thus used to bind prominent men together, but unlike earlier empresses, Diocletian kept them and their sons in relative obscurity.

The natural sons of his Caesars Severus and Constantius Chlorus soon lobbied for recognition, and Diocletian responded by naming them *fili Augustorum* (“sons of the Augusti”), but neither the women nor natural sons were advertised in Tetrarchic official media. Nor did Diocletian allow the natural sons to succeed their fathers upon the abdication of the Augusti.¹⁷⁶ Granting the biological sons any kind of imperial power threatened the fictive brotherhood that Diocletian had created with his fellow Augustus and their Caesars.¹⁷⁷ The structure of the Tetrarchy, therefore, did not allow imperial women to achieve the influence that Julia Domna had enjoyed. Indeed, the imperial wives of the new system were largely absent in official media and primary sources.

Diocletian’s system of selecting co-rulers with military valor was a radical departure from the inherited and adopted succession strategies of the first three centuries of the Empire. The succession policy of the Tetrarchy fell apart shortly after Diocletian and Maximian abdicated the throne in 305. It was not long before disputes over succession nearly ignited a full-blown civil war between the Tetrarchs and natural sons. The hostilities compelled Diocletian to emerge out of retirement to chair the Conference at Carnuntum in 308. There, Diocletian recognized Galerius as his successor and senior Augustus of the East. Galeria Valeria was also awarded the Augusta title, the only Tetrarchic woman to enjoy this title.¹⁷⁸ Licinius and

¹⁷⁶ Byron Lloyd Waldron, “Diocletian, Hereditary Succession and the Tetrarchic Dynasty.” (Ph.D., University of Sydney, 2018), 146.

¹⁷⁷ As Waldron sees it, Diocletian understood that a scorned prince had the potential to lead a rebellion and undermine the stability and peace of the Tetrarchic system he had worked so hard to established, and so his new system deemphasized the role of such offspring Waldron, “Diocletian, Hereditary Succession and the Tetrarchic Dynasty,” 146.

¹⁷⁸ It is unclear who awarded Galeria the Augusta honorific.

Maximinus Daia acknowledged Galerius' position by minting coins for Galeria Valeria with the same types and legends as those minted under Galerius (Figure 31).¹⁷⁹

Galeria Valeria mints and authorities

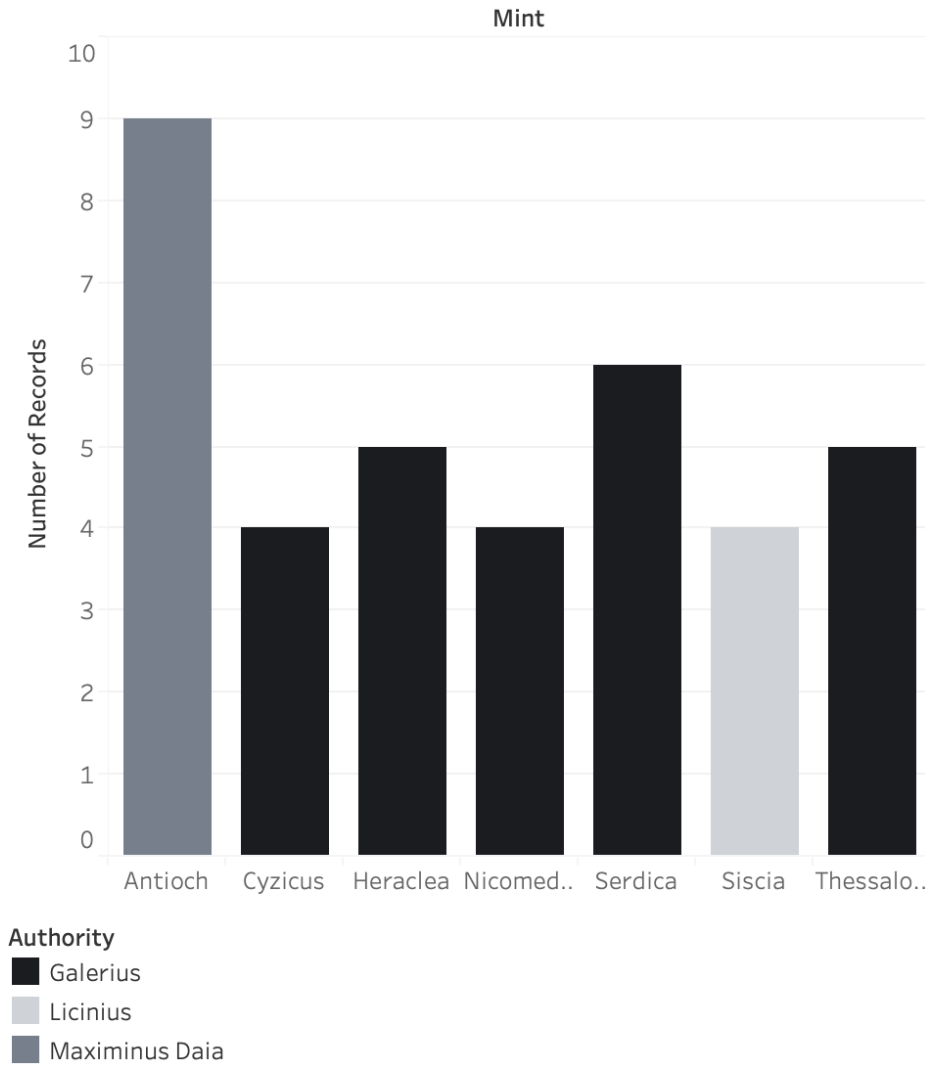


Figure 31. Galeria Valeria mints and authorities.

As the daughter of Diocletian and wife of Galerius, Galeria offered a legitimacy that both the younger Caesars desired and feared. Galerius had profited from her Augusta title; it called attention to the bond between Galerius and Diocletian. Maximinus Daia and Licinius both

¹⁷⁹ Though the types and legends are the same, the portraits are dramatically different

minted coins for Galeria Valeria, identical to those of her husband's: a simple obverse portrait with the legend GALERIA VALERIA AVG, and VENERI VICTRICI as the reverse legend above an image of Venus (Figure 32).¹⁸⁰ The Venus Victrix coins are akin to the claims inherent in the Mater Castrorum title, suggesting that the empress had a relationship with the military. The Venus aspect probably ties back to preceding uses of Venus Victrix observed under Faustina and Julia Domna. The bulk of Galeria's coinage was minted under her husband in Serdica, Cyzicus, Nicomedia, Heraclea, and Thessalonica.¹⁸¹ Under the Tetrarchy, new mints opened near the frontiers to accommodate the army and in the cities of each Tetrarch. The Thessalonica mint opened in 298/9 when Galerius took residence in the city and eventually surpassed the mint in Heraclea in mint production, thus closing it.¹⁸² Licinius issued seven types out of Siscia, while Maximinus Daia issued eighteen from the mint in Antioch.

Galerius died from cancer in 311, the year in which all three minting authorities stop issuing Galeria's coinage. Licinius and Daia competed for Galerius's territories and divided them amongst each other. Additionally, both rivals sought to possess Galeria and the imperial essence she seemed to carry as the daughter of one emperor, wife of another, and (step)mother of a third (Candidianus).¹⁸³ On his deathbed, Galerius entrusted his wife Galeria Valeria and his mother-in-law Prisca to Licinius, the Augustus of the West (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 35). Instead of staying with Licinius, Galeria opted Daia's protection, imagining that she would be safe under his

¹⁸⁰ Figure 32: *RIC* 6.53 numismatics.org/collection/1958.191.2

¹⁸¹ Because the Alexandrian mint produced Greek tetradrachms made of debased content and functioned within a closed economy, they have been excluded from this study. Bill Leadbetter, *Galerius and the Will of Diocletian* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 99; *RIC* 6, page 5-6.

¹⁸² Leadbetter, *Galerius and the Will of Diocletian*, 99.

¹⁸³ Galeria bore no children of her own, but was stepmother to Candidianus (Kienast, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, 286). According to Lactantius, Candidianus is the bastard son of Galerius and a concubine (Leadbetter, *Galerius*, 156; 204. Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 20; 50). Galerius also reportedly had a daughter, Valeria Maximilla, by another unknown woman. Very little is known other than she was married to Maxentius to form a political alliance with his father, Maximian (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 18.9). There is no coin evidence of Valeria Maximilla.

supervision, especially because he was married (Lactant. *De mort. per.* 39). As the daughter of Diocletian and the widow of Galerius, Galeria understood that she had much to offer a Tetrarch seeking to distinguish himself from the others, and much to fear if she chose to marry an ambitious man (Lactant. *De mort. per.* 39).

Galeria soon found herself the recipient of an unwanted marriage proposal by Daia. She was still mourning the loss of her husband, whose ashes “were yet warm,” and spurned Daia’s request. He flew into a rage and stripped the empress of her property, torturing her friends, and driving her and her mother Prisca into exile (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 39). Diocletian tried intervening on his daughter’s behalf and requested that his daughter and wife be returned to him, only for Daia to ignore his pleas (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 41). The former imperial women lived as vagabonds for fifteen months until they were captured and executed by Licinius, who had only recently defeated Daia and claimed his portion of the empire (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 51).¹⁸⁴ Because Licinius sought to eliminate every threat and potential challenge to his authority, he systematically executed Galeria, Prisca, Candidianus, the son of Severus, and the wife and children of Maximinius Daia.

Conclusion

Imperial coinage was a useful vehicle for disseminating the emperor’s message to the populace. Its carefully tailored messages highlight the virtues with which the emperor sought to endow himself and his family, presenting them in the best possible light. Familial metaphors in imperial propaganda provided subjects an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging with the

¹⁸⁴ Translation by John Vanderspoel, “Lactantius: Of the Manner in which the Persecutors Died.”

emperor and the wider empire. The advertisement of imperial women and children promised peace and prosperity beyond the emperor's reign and guaranteed a peaceful transition of power. Imperial women were critical in the emperor's propaganda, since it is through them and their bodies that new emperors sprang and an emperor who inherits the throne is only as legitimate as his mother was chaste.

Julia Domna's coinage underwent three phases throughout the reigns of Septimius Severus and Caracalla. In Phase 1, Domna was promoted on imperial coinage with feminine virtues found on Faustina's coinage that emphasized her chastity, fertility, and devotion to the state and imperial *domus*. The shared reverse types between Julia Domna and Faustina were part of Septimius Severus' self-adoption into the house of Marcus Aurelius. The empress' coinage in Phase 2 focused on the succession of Caracalla and Geta as the future emperors to succeed Severus. Her maternal role in the dynasty is advertised in order to counter rumors that challenged their succession. Phase 3 is marked by Caracalla's ascension to the throne in which Domna's coins downplay her role in the administration and veer away from the dynastic propaganda of her late husband.

Emperors of the third century who sought to establish their own dynasties chose not to employ the familial metaphors or metaphorical motherhoods in their dynastic succession that Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus did. Philip celebrated his wife Otacilia Severa for her actual motherhood and the traditional motherly virtues to legitimate Philip II as successor. Her coinage reflected the priorities and challenges of her husband. Imperial women were virtually invisible in the first Tetrarchy. By the time Galerius became Augustus of the East, Galeria Valeria appears on coinage with the Venus Victrix types. Only Julia Domna was awarded a number of metaphorical motherhood titles over various social institutions to legitimize her

husband and their sons as future heirs of the dynasty or to enlist their help in maintaining order in the imperial *domus* and thus the empire.

The three empresses under examination here represent turning points in the history of succession ideologies. Marcus Aurelius was the last of a line of five emperors who were raised to the purple through adoption or the imprimatur of the Senate. Senators like Pliny the Younger and Cassius Dio enthusiastically promoted adopted succession, the model in which the emperor selected an experienced successor from the Senate. During periods in which emperors chose their successors through adoption, imperial women were largely absent from propaganda. Faustina the Younger and her dynastic connection with three emperors afforded Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius the opportunity to counter the adopted succession ideology with dynastic propaganda. In particular, Marcus Aurelius employed family metaphors and metaphorical motherhood and maternal virtues in advertising Faustina and his children that invited subjects to see themselves as intimate of the imperial family.

Emperors who sought to establish dynasties advertised their wives both to legitimate their own position and promote their son(s). Just as Marcus Aurelius employed Faustina the Younger to legitimate his position and promote Commodus, so too did Severus leverage Julia Domna to justify his self-adoption into the Antonine line and promote his sons as future emperors. Her metaphorical motherhood and extravagant titlature were propagandistic tools used in legitimating the emperor's dynasty and preventing any political challengers.

From the middle of the third century, however, emperors seized the throne through battlefield victories or at the head of mutinous troops seeking better leadership. The emphasis on military prowess meant that imperial women and the relationships that they advertised to

legitimate emperors and their sons were often ignored. Emperors who did have sons and dynastic ambitions, however, promoted their wives, but for different reasons than did the emperors of the first and second centuries. Otacilia Severa was promoted on Roman coins to legitimate Philip II as Caesar and later co-Augustus. Galerius utilized Galeria Valeria to legitimate his promotion to Augustus of the East. Seeking to enhance their own legitimacy, Licinius and Maximinus Daia celebrated her on coins from their mints. Daia recognized her legitimating power, which was presumably why he offered to divorce his own wife to marry her. As the daughter of one emperor and widow of another, she carried within her person the essence of empire. Because she was not willing to yield Licinius all the inheritance from Galerius that she had denied Daia, he hunted her down and executed her after she had wandered for fifteen months in exile.

It should not be surprising that the imperial propaganda reflected in the coin types we have been considering in this chapter resonated strongly with the subject populations of the empire. The impact can be evaluated in dedicatory inscriptions erected by subject populations that honored the empresses and awarded them metaphorical motherhood titles that were no longer issued on coinage. In the next chapter, I examine the responses to imperial propaganda in the form of inscriptions. Subject populations honored the emperor and his family, and sometimes, solely the empress, in inscriptions that demonstrated loyalty to the state and imperial domus.

CHAPTER 2: RESPONSES TO IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA

As I demonstrated in Chapter One, images of empresses on coinage were particularly useful in legitimating emperors and building consensus for the emperor's dynastic succession. Endowed with metaphorical motherhood titles, these titles legitimated the emperor and established the uncontested succession for his successor(s). Emperors employed the images of their wives based upon their needs, tailoring their messages to appeal to various subject populations, sometimes seeking their financial support in the form of crowns, but also simply seeking to build consensus for their reigns and successors.¹⁸⁵ The exchange of imperial messages to subjects and their responses allowed the emperor and subjects to engage in conversations and dialogues, and therefore negotiate imperial dynastic ideology.¹⁸⁶ These responses take the form of dedicatory inscriptions that were mostly erected by elites, military units and cities or civic groups responding to dynastic propaganda.¹⁸⁷

It seems likely that subjects erected these dedicatory and honorific inscriptions with the expectation or at least the hope that they would be seen by the emperor, or if not seen, at least heard of the offering. The negotiation between the emperor and his subjects regarding proposed honorifics recorded for Marcus Aurelius and Tiberius suggests that civic entities made certain

¹⁸⁵ Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 176.

¹⁸⁶ Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 7.

¹⁸⁷ Our database also includes inscriptions from more humble individuals, including imperial slaves (e.g. *CIL* 8, 27550) and freedmen (e.g. *AE* 2006, +32), and individual veterans (e.g. *AE* 2004, +93) and soldiers (e.g. *CIL* 6, 36775).

that the imperial house knew of the honors they were awarded.¹⁸⁸ Other dedicants such as imperial administrators doubtless made certain that the emperor was aware of his loyalty. Less certain are the expectations of the dedicants of more humble offerings. Did, for example, the lone veteran who dedicated the bathhouse in his own residence to the empress Otacilia Severa expect that she would ever hear or know of the supposed honor?¹⁸⁹ Or was the dedication more a demonstration of his attempts to link himself to the imperial family and thus increase his prestige in his community?

The fact that subjects erected these dedication and honors suggests that the exchanges were designed to create lasting relationships in which the emperor sent messages and communities responded with the expectation that the emperors would again send messages, or that they could ask favors or concessions from him. Unfortunately, our data is such that it is difficult to trace more than one exchange between an emperor and a city. But in all likelihood, such exchanges were ongoing and could be initiated in either direction.

This chapter examines the civic and military responses to imperial propaganda that celebrate Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa, and Galeria Valeria. I argue that these awards were more than expressions of loyalty to the emperor. They also expressed the subjects' hopes for uncontested dynastic succession. There are three phases of Julia Domna's celebration that correspond with her advertisement in official media under Septimius Severus and Caracalla. As the *Mater Castrorum*, *Senatus*, and *Patriae* titles are phased out of official media, subjects continue using the titles in dedications. Otacilia Severa is celebrated on milestones and statue bases with metaphorical motherhood titles despite never receiving any of the titles officially. This trend continues as late as the 300s with subjects raising inscriptions to Galeria Valeria as the

¹⁸⁸ *AE* 1929, 99-100.

¹⁸⁹ *CIL* 3, 8113: I discuss this inscription in Otacilia Severa's section.

Mater Castrorum. The continued use of these titles indicates that subjects desired a peaceful succession.

The official promotion of empresses declined precipitously after Julia Mamaea's death in 235 due in part to emperors finding legitimacy for their reigns on the battlefield; those emperors who continued to advertise their wives to promote dynastic succession ceased employing grandiose metaphorical motherhoods like Mater Castrorum, Mater Senatus, and Mater Patriae in official media. The number of dedicatory and honorific inscriptions that mention empresses also declined precipitously and became more formulaic in their use of titulature. Some subject populations, however, continued to award the metaphorical motherhood titles and other honorifics to empresses in dedicatory inscriptions. The inclusion of these titles in dedicatory inscriptions constitute responses to dynastic propaganda, and probably indicate subjects' desire for the stability that the titles promised.

Over the course of the third century, the types of dedicatory inscriptions became fewer and their dedicants limited to the very wealthy and corporate bodies like cities. Perhaps after the economic devastation wrought by nearly continuous civil wars and frequent invasions, only cities and imperial administrators could afford the expense of honoring the imperial family. By the mid-third century, milestones and statue bases constituted the majority of the inscriptions erected by subjects. Milestones were quasi-official inscriptions that dotted the roads of the empire and were erected sometimes by military units, sometimes by cities or *koinon*, and some that list the emperor and his family in the nominative, may have been erected under imperial supervision. Statue bases also constitute a significant proportion of the later empress' inscriptions. Because it was unlikely that a city would erect a statue only for the empress, these statues were likely family groupings that included the emperor and his successor(s), costly

endeavors even for cities. The expense of erecting such a grouping would have precluded all but the very wealthy from communicating with the imperial house in this manner.

Theoretical Foundation

Dietmar Kienast cataloged the imperial titles and honors of emperors and family members from Augustus to Theodosius.¹⁹⁰ Though he meticulously lists the titles and dates awarded to distinguished members of the imperial *domus*, he does not distinguish between titles promulgated in official media like imperial coinage and inscriptions, and in unofficial dedications erected by subject populations. The distinction is significant because the second category reveals the ideological negotiations between emperors and their subjects that the first category lacks.

Emperors and empresses had their own reasons for employing official titles, as did subjects. It was customary and polite when addressing the emperor in person or by petition to use the full titlature. This was a strategy that forced the petitioner to recognize the emperor's authority and legitimacy before s/he was allowed to utter one word of their own. The official titlature of an empress worked a bit differently. Stories that emperors told about their wives, mothers, and daughters revolved around their own and their successors' legitimacy. The empress' titles were a miniature narrative of the emperor's legitimacy and his dynastic ambitions. When subjects addressed the empress, it was often to request something from the

¹⁹⁰ Kienast, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, xxiii.

emperor.¹⁹¹ When they employed the empress' official titles, they acknowledged and expressed consensus for the emperor's succession plans.

The dedicatory inscriptions that subjects erected sometimes echoed these official titles, or ignored them, and sometimes augmented them with honors of their own choosing. When differences between official, imperially sanctioned titles and personal usage in private inscriptions are noted, epigraphers often ascribe the difference to the dedicant's unfamiliarity with official titlature.¹⁹² In other cases, carelessness seems to be the best explanation.¹⁹³ Official titlature was easy to find if the dedicants cared to acknowledge it—in the marketplace, on temples, in proclamations, and even on coinage inside their purses. Coinage made these titles accessible to subjects from the shadow of Hadrian's wall to the porticos of Palmyra. Inscriptions that failed to include imperial titles, therefore, are just as meaningful a response as those that honored the empress with titles that she had not been officially awarded.

The interpretations set forth in this chapter are based on evidence found in the *Matres Castrorum Inscriptions* database that Julie Langford and I gathered and curated between 2018 and 2020.¹⁹⁴ We gathered and examined the literary, numismatic, and epigraphic evidence, noting who received the title and identifying the subjects who employed it. The database contains the transcriptions and translations of each inscription, as well as the inscription's type and medium, erasures from *damnationes memoriae*, ancient and modern locations, and titlature

¹⁹¹ I discuss one such inscription erected by the city of Ephesus in Phase 2 of Julia Domna's inscriptions (*AE* 2001, 1896).

¹⁹² Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," n. 65.

¹⁹³ Langford and I found this to be the case especially in inscriptions erected by only one or two individuals. Group dedicants stick closer to official titlature. An exceptional statue base dedicated by Marcus Asidonius Verus Faventinus, *libellis Augusti*, to Ulpia Severina (wife of Aurelian, 270-275) awarded her Julia Domna's titlature (*AE* 1930, 150). The dedication may have been too much for him to afford because he reused a first century base whose inscription had been inverted from frontal view (*CIL* 2-14, 927). It is unclear if this dedication was an example of carelessness, or an attempt to flatter the empress.

¹⁹⁴ Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 2.

awarded to imperial women. Ultimately, Langford and I determined that subjects who celebrated the empress did so to express their support for the dynasty, to give thanks for a benefaction, or to seek the empress' influence in some matter.

Methodology: Building the Database¹⁹⁵

In order to detect the ideology that was created within the exchange of communications between the emperor and his subjects, Langford and I searched for any inscriptions erected by the imperial house in hopes of establishing an empress' official titles. To do so, we downloaded data from the Severan Database Project's *Inscriptions of Julia Domna*, and supplemented it with every inscription we could find that specifically named at least one of the thirteen empresses named Mater Castrorum, regardless of whether the inscription mentioned the title or not. The Severan Database Project was originally published on a University of South Florida server (web3.cas.usf.edu/main/other/severan/). The university page has since been removed. It can be located at hennarot.forest.usf.edu/main/other/severan/. The most recent version of all the databases (available for download), including coinage and inscriptions, can be found on our GitHub page (github.com/usf-portal/severan-database-project). Langford and I then consulted with Trismeigestos to establish the geocoordinates required for data visualization which we accomplished through Tableau software. Interactive visualizations of the inscriptions to Julia Domna and Otacilia are available for viewing online at Tableau Public (Figure 33). Information on the inscriptions can easily be filtered by selecting an inscription (or more) in a particular area, populating the year group (applicable for Julia Domna), dedicant type, and the subset of the

¹⁹⁵ For an introduction on building the database and how I use it in my dissertation, please refer to page 23 of the Introduction.

dedicants. We consulted online databases such as the Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss Slaby, the Packard Humanities Institute, Europeana Eagle Project, and Epigraphic Database Heidelberg in collecting the inscriptions.¹⁹⁶



Figure 33. Interactive visualizations on Tableau Public

We next translated the inscriptions and classified them into one of five dedicant types:

Anonymous, Civic, Imperial, Imperial Administration, and Military. Not all dedicants fit neatly into the categories we assigned to them and we had to make some difficult decisions. For example, we chose to categorize *Legati Augusti*, provincial governors, as imperial administrators, even when they commanded legions. Senators and equestrians who did not also

¹⁹⁶ Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss Slaby (EDCS); Packard Humanities Institute (PHI); Europeana Eagle Project (Eagle); and Epigraphic Database Heidelberg (EDH). All websites are provided in the Appendix.

name themselves as office holders were classified as Civic. To achieve greater precision in identifying the social position of dedicants, we broke the five dedicant types into subtypes.¹⁹⁷ Examining the inscriptions erected by various subject populations allowed us to hear the responses to imperial propaganda, and to detect voices and perspectives of those unrepresented in literature and archaeology. Categorizing the inscriptions by dedicant, date range, and locations allowed us to conduct quantitative analyses and detect patterns in dedicants as well as variations in titlature.

There are some major hurdles in working with inscriptions and quantifying them in order to measure subject responses. First, there is no guarantee that the inscriptions that survive are representative of those that were created in antiquity. Secondly, inscriptions that were erected in locations that remained under continuous habitation often became spolia – repurposed building materials. This phenomenon inhibits our ability to measure accurately the proportion of inscriptions erected in major cities as opposed to villages. Neither of these hurdles can really be accounted for in the data; unfortunately, we can only work with what we have. Another major hurdle in working with inscriptions from the third century is the ubiquity of *damnationes memoriae* (erasures) of disgraced imperial family members from inscriptions and monuments.¹⁹⁸ *Damnationes memoriae* were relatively common after the death of Septimius Severus, leaving many inscriptions scarred and their texts fragmentary.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, a fair amount of conjecture is required to imagine the original texts. Langford and I attempted to be as conservative as possible in these reconstructions in order to avoid exaggerating the empresses' titles and thus

¹⁹⁷ Some of the more frequent dedicant subtypes are cities, *Legati Augusti* (provincial governors), slaves, freedmen, priests, veterans, and groups of soldiers.

¹⁹⁸ Eric R. Varner, *From Caligula to Constantine: Tyranny & Transformation in Roman Portraiture* (Atlanta: Michael C. Carlos Museum, 2000), 10.

¹⁹⁹ Some inscriptions were palimpsests, erased and recarved repeatedly. The *Porta Argentarii*, for example, underwent multiple *damnationes memoriae* as is evidenced by the different depths of erasures and reinscriptions.

inadvertently elevating their importance in succession ideology.²⁰⁰ These limitations cannot be overcome, so they must be acknowledged.

Even so, we have collected approximately 900 inscriptions dedicated to empresses from Julia Domna through Galeria Valeria (195 to 313), which should prove an adequate sample size from which to draw some conclusions about who celebrated the empresses, how they did so, and perhaps offer some speculations as to why. For the purposes of this chapter, I will only examine inscriptions dedicated to Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa, and Galeria Valeria (Figure 34).

Dedicant Types and Subtypes by Empress

Type	Subset	Empress			Grand Total
		Julia Domna	Otacilia Severa	Galeria Valeria	
Anonymous	Anonymous	109	12	1	122
	Group	2			2
	Individual	6			6
	Milestone	12	16	1	29
Civic	Anonymous	1	1		2
	Assembly	52			52
	C. Group	12			12
	City	91	13	1	105
	Collegium	4			4
	Individual	19			19
	Magistrate	29	1		30
	Milestone	9	11		20
	Priesthood	29	2		31
	Senator	2			2
Imperial	Domus	2			2
	Empress	1			1
	Milestone	2	13		15
Imperial Admin	Augustales		1		1
	Freedman	8			8
	legati Augusti	13	3	1	17
	Procurator	11	1		12
	Slave	1			1
	Vilicus	7			7
Military	Collegium	8			8
	legati Augusti		1		1
	M. Group	37	5		42
	Milestone	5	5		10
	Paramilitary	3			3
	Soldier	44			44
	Veteran	10	1		11
Grand Total		529	86	4	619


Number of Records

 1 109

Figure 34. Dedicant Types and Subsets to each Empress

²⁰⁰ As a rule, whenever a text appeared to be erased and reinscribed (as became apparent from patterns of titlature which will be further discussed below), we recorded and counted the earlier inscription.

Phase 1: Julia Domna's Inscriptions 195-197

Between 193-196, Septimius Severus was primarily engaged in eliminating his rivals Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus. Beside his battles on the field, he waged a propaganda war, tailoring messages about his self-adoption into the Antonine family, Julia Domna's Mater Castrorum title, and Caracalla's promotion to Caesar to specific audiences, and carefully managing the timing each announcement.²⁰¹ Severus curated his news to subject populations not only to gain their political support, but also because provincial cities expressed gratitude and support for the emperor in the form of *aurum coronarium* (gold crowns).²⁰²

Phase One of Julia Domna's inscriptions begins slightly later than her first phase in coinage. Subjects do not celebrate Julia Domna on inscriptions until 195, two years after her coins began circulating (Figure 35). The low numbers of dedications probably reflect subjects' wait-and-see attitude concerning the impending showdown between Septimius Severus and Clodius Albinus. There was danger in openly supporting one rival over another. Cities and individuals who supported Pescennius Niger found themselves appealing to the emperor for mercy, as in the case of Cassius Clemens (Cass. Dio 75(75).8.4-9.4).²⁰³ Showing support for one candidate over another was a commitment, and it is likely that each of the inscriptions erected

²⁰¹ Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 184; Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 23-38; Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 2-3.

²⁰² Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 36; Ando, *Imperial Ideology*, 176: According to Ando, the imperial administration viewed crown contributions as taxes but treated them as voluntary gifts that the emperor used for funding military campaigns. Ultimately, the crowns his subjects sent in response to such events enriched imperial coffers and strengthened the emperor's relationship with his subjects through a unifying message of inclusivity.

²⁰³ Cassius Dio relates that Cassius Clemens explained to Septimius Severus that he only supported his rival because he was physically closest to him. In an act of clemency, Severus returns half the property to Clemens.

during this period were by partisans who were either known to the imperial administration or wanted to be known as supporters.

Inscriptions Honoring Julia Domna by type and date

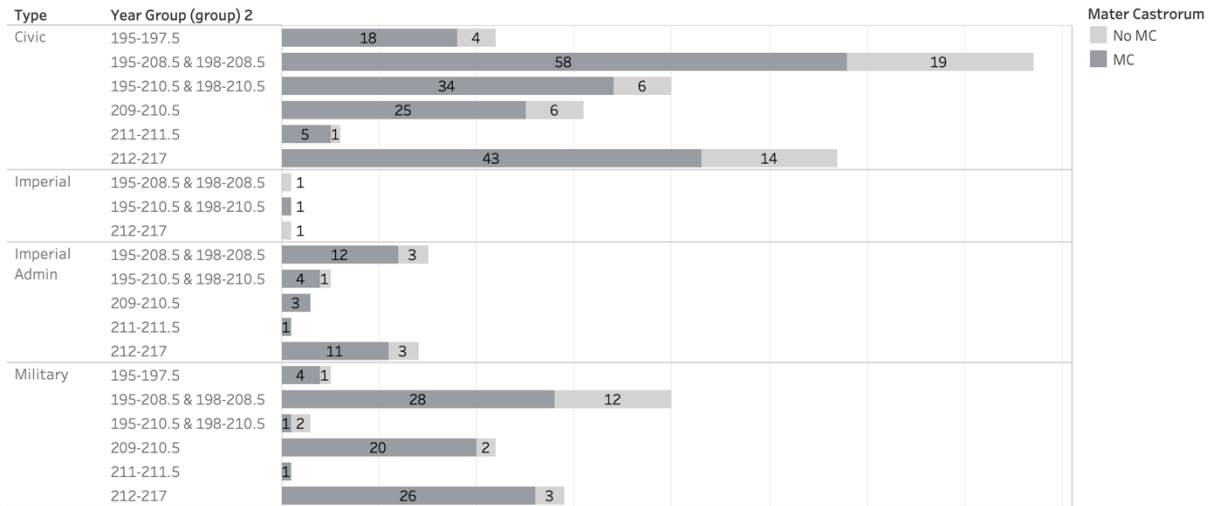


Chart illustrates the sum of inscriptions mentioning Julia Domna with the exception of milestones. Dates of the inscriptions determined from eponymous magistrates, the emperor's tribunicia potestas dates, or the empress' titles. Date ranges vary but they are grouped here for easy viewing.

Figure 35. Julia Domna Inscriptions by Year Group

Approximately 80% of inscriptions mentioning Julia Domna from this period were erected by civic assemblies outside Italy (Figure 36). We find them in modern day Algeria, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey, which suggests that Severus heavily advertised his dynastic propaganda to cities around the empire. Julia Domna is referred to as Augusta, Coniunx Augusti (“wife of Augustus”), a unique title, and Mater Castrorum, an official one she received on 14 April 195.²⁰⁴ Civic dedicants employed the Mater Castrorum title in 82% of their inscriptions.

²⁰⁴ Civic and anonymous dedicants celebrate the Coniunx Augusti title: *AE* 1975, 142; *IG* 7, 1845; *CIL* 8, 5699; *CIL* 10, 7272; *CIL* 9, 4880; *CIL* 2-5, 721; *CIL* 8, 6702; *CIL* 10, 7502. For the Mater Castrorum title: *BGU* II 362.13 and Chapter 1 footnote 28 for additional information.

Distribution of Inscriptions Dedicated to Julia Domna from 195-197



Figure 36. Distribution of Inscriptions to Julia Domna from 195-197

Langford claimed that Septimius Severus the military was not the primary target of the *Mater Castrorum* title, and that the emperor neither marketed it to the military nor did the military respond. However, we found five inscriptions from this period whose dedicants were classified as Military, and four of these included the *Mater Castrorum* title. This does not mean that Langford's initial conclusions should be abandoned, however. The Military type in our database includes a wide variety of men including active legionaries and auxiliaries, praetorian guards, veterans, and military *collegia*. This does not mean, however, that each of these subtypes had the same motivations or priorities. Indeed, veteran colonists probably had more in common with civic elites than with active military men. One group of veterans had much to gain from the stability that Severus offered them in exchange for their support. A statue base erected by the veterans of Legio X, the Decumani, located in Gallia Narbonensis (modern France) honors Julia

Domna, but was likely one statue in a grouping dedicated to Severus and Caracalla.²⁰⁵ The veteran colony may have been the target of Severan propaganda not because it was made up of veterans *per se*, but because it was a new colony and thus anxious to establish a relationship with the imperial house. Three of the remaining inscriptions were erected by members of the Legio III Augusta at Lambaesis in current day Algeria. This legion helped Severus avenge Pertinax's death and seize imperial power, for which service the emperor awarded the legion Pia Vindex.²⁰⁶ Notably, the three inscriptions all mention Severus' fictive lineage and Julia Domna's Mater Castrorum title, indicating that the dedicants these troops were aware of Severus' dynastic propaganda.²⁰⁷ Troops campaigning beside the emperor however, likely knew nothing about the fictive lineage or the Mater Castrorum title since neither appear in the issues from the traveling Eastern mints that produced the specie to pay troops.²⁰⁸ The final military dedicatory inscription from this period was erected by Marcus Valerius Valentinus, the assistant of the Praetor of the Ravenna fleet, in Rome. Valentinus erected the altar with his own funds, and thus presumably wanted to flatter the emperor by getting his titles correct. Notably, he employed neither the Antonine lineage nor the Mater Castrorum title. This failure to include the titles may be an indication that neither were advertised in Italy during this period.²⁰⁹

The wide geographical distribution of dedicatory inscriptions and the concentration of Civic dedicants suggests that Severus tailored messages concerning his fictive lineage and Julia Domna's Mater Castrorum titles for provincial subjects, perhaps in a bid to raise money for the

²⁰⁵ *CIL* 12, 4345.

²⁰⁶ hauburn.tripod.com/LegIII.html

²⁰⁷ *CIL* 8, 18253; 2550; 2552.

²⁰⁸ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 38-44.

²⁰⁹ *AE* 1971, 28.

upcoming showdown against Clodius Albinus. The handful of military responses suggest, on the other hand, that the military as a whole knew nothing of these titles.

Phase 2: Julia Domna's Inscriptions 198-211

Active military units and imperial officials joined the chorus of responses to dynastic propaganda in the second phase of Severus' reign (198-211), when advertisements and promotions were at their highest for the entire imperial *domus*. The period of 198 to 211 saw a substantial increase in dedications to the empress after Septimius Severus defeated his former Caesar, Clodius Albinus. I noted in the previous chapter that imperial propaganda in this period focused on celebrating the emperor's achievements and promoting his sons as successors. The first event the emperor celebrated during this period was Caracalla and Geta's elevation to Augustus and Caesar respectively in 198. The next major event was the arranged marriage of Caracalla and Plautilla in 202. The emperor arranged the marriage between his son and the daughter of his friend and Praetorian Praefect, Gaius Fulvius Plautianus. Through this union, Severus eliminated any opportunities for senatorial families to worm their way into the imperial family.²¹⁰ Septimius Severus celebrated his *decennalia* shortly after in 204. Compared to the earlier phase of Severus' reign, there is a significant increase of dedicatory and honorific inscriptions in mentioning Julia Domna. We have identified 257 surviving examples of these, which averages out to around 21 dedication per annum. These inscriptions are mainly concentrated in North Africa, Syria and the Levant, Greece, Italy, and Turkey. Civic and military

²¹⁰ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 41.

dedications constitute the majority of inscriptions from this period, equaling approximately 71% of the total (Figure 37).

Distribution of Inscriptions Dedicated to Julia Domna from 198-211

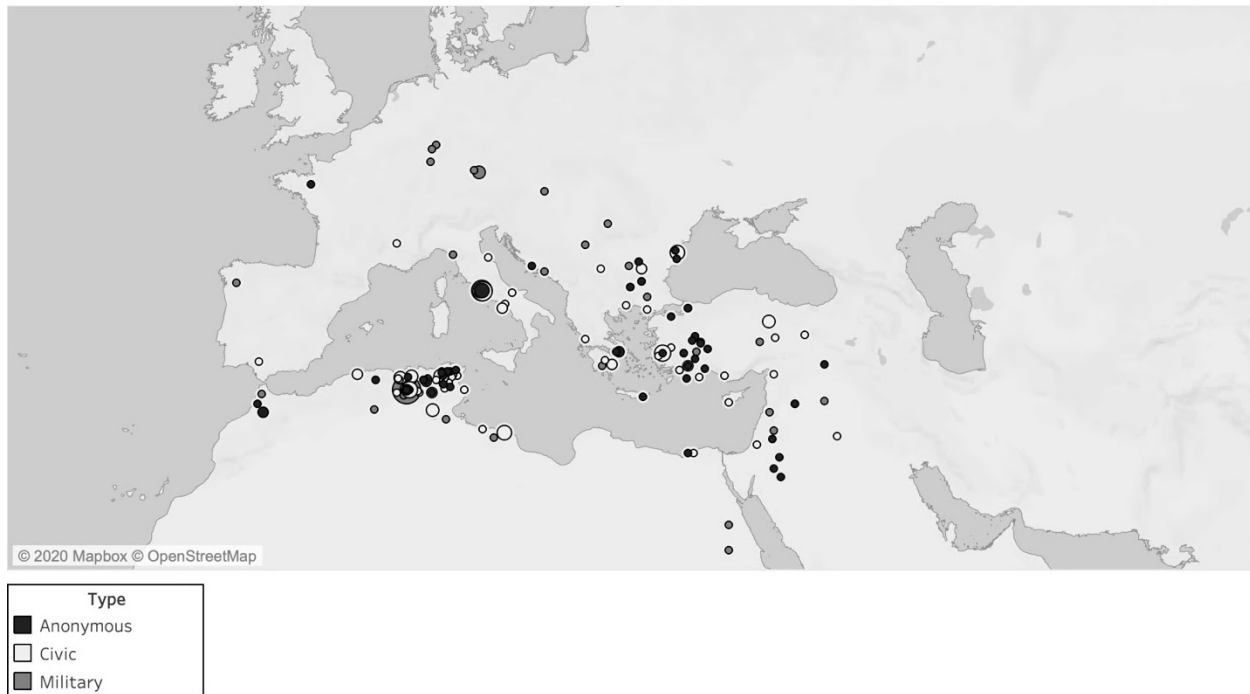


Figure 37. Distribution of Inscriptions to Julia Domna from 198-211

Overwhelmingly, Julia Domna is celebrated as *Mater Castrorum* on 199 inscriptions, amounting to 77% of her total inscriptions erected by all subject populations.²¹¹ Soldiers in Lambaesis (in modern Algeria) are among the top contributors, erecting altars honoring the empress in group dedications. Most notably, none of the dedications emanating from Lambaesis employ the *Mater Castrorum* title at all. Indeed, the *Mater Castrorum* appears on two inscriptions erected in Novae (Bulgaria) and Sparta (Greece).²¹²

²¹¹ The only title belonging to Julia Domna that I will not discuss is the *Mater Augusti*. The discussion for this title will be reserved for future publication of this dissertation. I will discuss the *Mater Augusti* title in the context of Otacilia Severa.

²¹² Bulgarian inscription: *AE* 1982, 849; Greek inscription: *AE* 1972, 570.

Subjects barely use the Mater Caesaris title, which appears on only eight dedications. The decrease in dedications naming the empress as Mater Caesaris corresponds with the timeline in which Geta is elevated to Augustus in 209. The Mater Caesaris title only appears on inscriptions that are dedicated in groups. Civic entities contribute five dedications. The inscription located in Novae that names Julia Domna as Mater Castrorum is the only dedication in this period to use Mater Caesaris.²¹³ It would make sense that the Mater Caesaris title was dropped from inscriptions once Geta was promoted to rank the of Augustus in 209. Subjects now celebrated Julia Domna as Mater Augustorum on 90 inscriptions in celebration of Geta's elevation to Augustus, joining his brother and father.²¹⁴ Almost every subject population uses the new title in their dedications with the exception of the Imperial *domus*.

Some inscriptions can be more accurately dated based upon the members of the imperial family. Quintus Sicinius Clarus, the *Legatus Augusti* of Thracia, dedicated an inscription to the Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Geta, Julia Domna, Plautilla which had to be erected before Plautianus died in 205.²¹⁵ Another inscription by the *equus singularis* Augusti dedicated an altar honoring the imperial family Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Geta, Julia Domna, and Plautianus.²¹⁶ The match arranged by their fathers between Caracalla and Plautilla was a loveless one, with Caracalla openly despising his father-in-law. Cassius Dio reports that tensions brewed as Plautianus publicly slandered the empress, accusing her of adultery, which threatened the legitimacy of Severus' dynasty and the succession of Caracalla and Geta (Cass. Dio 76(75).15.6). Plautianus gained significant power in the emperor's administration to the point

²¹³ *AE* 1982, 849.

²¹⁴ Mater Augustorum is usually rendered as Mater Augg on inscriptions.

²¹⁵ *IGRR* 1 1492.

²¹⁶ *CIL* 6, 225: During the *principate*, the *equites singulares* were the cavalry arm of the Praetorian Guard. Septimius Severus expanded them until they were abandoned with the rest of the Paetorian Guard under Constantine.

that he was directly in competition with the emperor's sons and wife.²¹⁷ In 205, Caracalla lured Plautianus to the throne room where, before Severus, he charged him with treason, executed him, and threw his body into the street for exposure until it was buried. Inscriptions that once celebrated the marriage between Caracalla and Plautilla, as well as the father in law Plautianus underwent erasures following Plautianus' execution and Plautilla's exile.

An arch located just outside Rome's Forum Boarii bears at least two or possibly three stages of erasures following the *damnationes* of family members. The arch was erected by a group of *argentarii* (moneychangers) and *negotiantes boarii* (cattle merchants) in 204.²¹⁸ The interior side panels once depicted two sacrificial scenes of the imperial family members with Severus, Domna, and Geta on one side and Caracalla, Plautilla, and Plautianus on the other. The arch of the *argentarii* is easier to view than a triumphal arch because it is smaller, really not much bigger than a gate. The panels are close enough for anyone walking through to inspect the figures. The images and the names of Plautianus, Plautilla, and Geta were erased, though in at least two different stages.²¹⁹ It is generally assumed that Plautianus' name and image were erased after his execution. Perhaps Plautilla's were as well, even though she was not executed until after Geta's murder in 212. They may have received *damnationes memoriae* simultaneously with Geta's images.²²⁰

After the death of Septimius Severus in 211, Julia Domna was awarded unprecedented titles by the Senate, Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae.²²¹ Due to rising tensions between Caracalla and Geta, the Senate awarded these titles so as to adopt itself as the empress' "son."

²¹⁷ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 40.

²¹⁸ *CIL* 6, 1035.

²¹⁹ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 135.

²²⁰ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 134-5.

²²¹ For a discussion dating these honors and titles, cf. Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 134-6. She posits that the Senate 'adopted' itself into the imperial family, in essence calling upon Julia Domna to maintain the peace that dynastic propaganda had claimed she maintained in the imperial family.

With each erasure, Julia Domna's titles grew longer. They even bear the titles awarded to the empress after the death of Severus in 211, Pia, Felix, Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae.²²² These were probably used to cover the space left by Geta's *damnatio memoriae* as evidenced by the deeper erasures. Despite the elaborate attempts to keep up with changing imperial family titles, there was little attempt to disguise the removal of family members' images, beyond a half-hearted rendering of Julia Domna's arm where Geta once stood.²²³

She is celebrated as Mater Senatus on 20 inscriptions erected by civic groups and a single veteran. Slightly fewer subjects celebrate the empress as Mater Patriae on 16 total inscriptions. Cities, assemblies, *collegia*, and a civic priest celebrate both these titles. An inscription located in Ostia Antica that was erected by a *sacerdos* honoring Julia Domna and using her titles Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae.²²⁴ These were inscribed over Geta's name following the *damnatio memoriae* engineered by his brother Caracalla. Cities and civic assemblies mostly celebrate Julia Domna as Coniunx Augusti. The title tapers off around 209 to 210/211 and is no longer mentioned in inscriptions after the death of the emperor.

Julia Domna's new titles, Pia and Felix, appear together on three inscriptions. A civic group of *decuriones* from the ancient city of Vazitana Sarra Civitas in modern-day Tunisia dedicated a gymnasium to the imperial family and the priest of Mercury.²²⁵ The inscription itself is marred with *damnationes memoriae* with Julia Domna's titles reinscribed over Geta's missing name. Though the titles were likely awarded to Julia Domna as a sort of plea to keep the peace between her sons, they did nothing to help quell the brothers' mutual animosity.

²²² See page 21 of Chapter One for a discussion of Julia Domna's titles.

²²³ ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=5761 and ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=5764

²²⁴ *CIL* 6, 1047.

²²⁵ *CIL* 8, 12006.

Phase 3: Julia Domna's Inscriptions Under Caracalla 212-217

Caracalla set out to create his own identity and authority in the aftermath of his brother's murder. He no longer advertised his mother with reverse types of the Mater Castrorum and Mater Augustorum. As the mints stopped issuing reverse types of the Mater Augustorum honorifics, so too did inscriptions bearing the honorific. Under Caracalla's reign, the Mater Caesaris titles appears on a single inscription dedicated to the emperor and his mother by the city of Cuicul in modern Algeria.²²⁶ Julia Domna is also referred to as Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae on the same inscription, which suffers no erasures. Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae appear on over 50% of Domna's inscriptions for this period, largely by civic populations, the military, and the imperial administration. Subjects embraced the Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae titles in dedications, perhaps believing in the relationship Julia Domna shared with the Senate in bringing some peace and stability to the state. Although the Mater Castrorum reverse types were no longer employed in official media, the title is found on 121 inscriptions, appearing on nearly all of the military inscriptions except for three dedications by active soldiers in modern Romania, Croatia, and France. These military dedications are scattered throughout the northern provinces and in clusters in North Africa (Figure 38).

²²⁶ *AE* 1911, 101.

Distribution of Military Inscriptions Dedicated to Julia Domna as Mater Castrorum 212-217



Figure 38. Distribution of Military Inscriptions Dedicated to Julia Domna as Mater Castrorum

During this period, the military seems to have learned about the Mater Castrorum title and they use it with enthusiasm. The empress' title appears on all thirteen inscriptions erected by Military dedicants. A paramilitary officer honors Julia Domna and Caracalla for his latest military victory in upper Britain, winning himself the title of Britannicus Maximus.²²⁷ Two veterans dedicated inscriptions to the emperor and his mother. The first dedication appears on a tabula by a veteran centurion from Legio III Augusta Antoniniana.²²⁸ The veterans in Philippopolis, Thrace dedicate a statue base to Caracalla and Julia Domna.²²⁹ A single military tabula located in Castra Exploratorum, Britannia was erected by the *Legatus Augusti pro praetore*, Gaius Julius Marcus.²³⁰ The inscription breaks off just before the dedication to Julia

²²⁷ *CIL* 6, 40647: According to the notes Epigraphic Database Heidelberg, the inscription is broken off at the bottom leaving it very damaged. Scholars dispute its provenance, either in Rome or Ostia Antica.

For more information and image of the inscription: edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD000052

²²⁸ *AE* 1976, 722.

²²⁹ *AE* 1939, 115.

²³⁰ *CIL* 7, 963.

Augusta, suggesting that the inscription was likely the jamb (the side post) of a doorway, in which the other jamb bore the inscription that honored Caracalla.

The military dedicants likely imagined that the empress was at least partially responsible for imperial decisions regarding the military and sought her favor with their dedications. A reference in Cassius Dio supports this interpretation by mentioning that Julia Domna handled Caracalla's imperial messages and access to the administrative side of the empire (Hdn. 5.3.2; Cass. Dio 78(77).18.2).²³¹ Subjects understood what Julia Domna's role was assigned within the administration and they appealed to her to ask the emperor on their behalf, as subjects had done even as early as Livia and Augustus.

One of the more exceptional inscriptions in this database is a marble plaque erected by the Imperial *Domus*, honoring Caracalla, Julia Domna, and the Ephesians.²³² It contains what seems like an invocation to Diana, the inscribed words of Julia Domna, who addresses herself as Julia Augusta, and Caracalla's response. The Ephesians wrote to the empress and asked her to convince the emperor in granting them a third *neokoros*.²³³ The Ephesians appealed to Julia Domna directly because they believed she had some influence over the emperor.²³⁴ Caracalla gave the Ephesians permission to count a temple dedicated to Artemis as a third *neokoros* and to refer to themselves as thrice *neokoroi*. In doing so, the emperor makes himself appear humble and pious. Under Caracalla, subjects continued honoring Julia Domna in inscriptions with some of her titlature she was awarded with under Septimius Severus' reign. Although imperial

²³¹ Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 6.

²³² *AE* 2001, 1896.

²³³ "Temple-keepers." According to LSJ⁹, νεοκόρος is a title that was assumed by Asiatic cities in Imperial times, when they had built a temple in honor of their patron-god or the Emperor, as Ephesus, "ν. Ἀρτέμιδος" Act.Ap.19.35.] Translation of this inscription text comes from J. H. Oliver, *Greek Constitutions of the Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri* (Philadelphia, 1989), 512-4, n.264-6.

²³⁴ Oliver, *Greek Constitutions*, 514.

coinage no longer touted the empress' titles, subjects continued to honor her in full titulature to request a favor.

Inscriptions Dedicated to Otacilia Severa

The period to that follows the death of Julia Domna and assassination of Caracalla, the period of the so-called "soldier emperors," saw a dramatic shift in dynastic propaganda. Subjects of the emperor endured invasions and political stability, with emperors legitimating their power by the military's acclamations. These soldier emperors downplayed their wives' influence in imperial politics, no longer honoring them with metaphorical motherhood titles. Perhaps these titles threatened their image as men and rulers; they were closely associated with overbearing and meddling women like Julia Domna and Mamaea, who elbowed their way into the masculine worlds of politics and the military and were widely thought to have dominated their sons (Hdn. 6.9.8; Cass. Dio 79(78).23.3). Perhaps the force of these women's personality or efficiency or competence was considered emasculating in a period in which military valor was the primary qualification in becoming emperor. Or, maybe, the titles, especially the *Mater Castrorum*, evoked memories of regicide, particularly Mamaea's brutal murder at the hands of her troops.²³⁵ Whatever the emperor's reasons for discontinuing the metaphorical motherhood titles in dynastic propaganda, subject populations continued employing them in their dedicatory inscriptions, though at a slower rate than under Julia Domna.

Two noticeable patterns emerge in dedications of Otacilia Severa, wife of Philip the Arab. First, the number of inscriptions dropped precipitously from the previous periods. Otacilia

²³⁵ Langford and Hotalen, "Mater Castrorum," 9-10.

Severa finds mention in 86 inscriptions, 46 of which are milestones. Otacilia is the sole dedicant of approximately 19% of her total inscriptions. These sole dedications were statue bases, and as discussed earlier, likely part of larger statuary groupings of the imperial family. A statuary grouping would have constituted a considerable expense and could only be afforded by cities and imperial administrators. An indicator that even these entities found it difficult to meet these expenses is that a number of the statue bases were reused (Figure 39).²³⁶

Percentage of Inscriptions Erected to Otacilia Severa as Sole Honoree

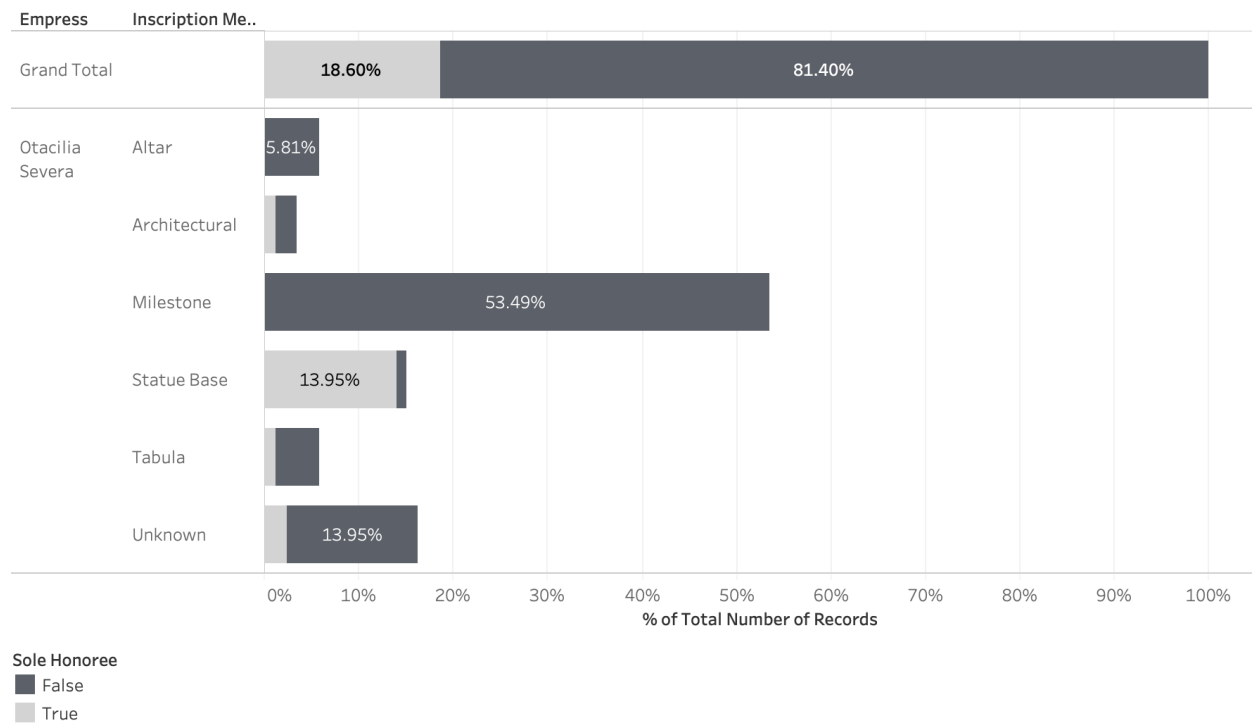


Figure 39. Percentage of Inscriptions Erected to Otacilia Severa as Sole Honoree. The “True” in light grey demonstrates the percentages of inscriptions dedicated to Otacilia alone. “False” in dark grey are the rest of the inscriptions that do not honor the empress alone.

Given the chaotic scramble for the purple in this period, it seems likely that subjects employed the titles to express their nostalgia for what the title originally offered: the guarantee of a non-violent transfer of power. Perhaps dedicants also sought favors from the empress,

²³⁶ Langford and Hotalen, “Mater Castrorum,” 11.

imagining that she may have some influence with the emperor, senate, or military. It is impossible to know for certain, but the title clearly *meant* something to the subject dedicants, otherwise they would not have employed it or employed it less.

Milestones make up nearly 60% of Otacilia Severa's inscriptions and appear along the roads of the empire (Figure 40). The milestones mentioning Otacilia Severa are of little help in establishing titulature. Some milestones are written with the names of the imperial *domus* in the nominative. Anne Kolb argues that milestones listed the *domus* in the nominative because the emperor was the source that underwrote and guaranteed the inscription's accuracy. Over the course of the third century, however, milestones evolved from building-like inscriptions in the nominative case to honorary or dedicatory ones in the dative; they nonetheless reflected the power of the emperor since he likely bankrolled and authorized them.²³⁷ Of the 46 milestones mentioning Otacilia Severa, about a third are in the nominative, 57% name her as the Mater Castrorum, while some go further still, adding the Mater Senatus and Mater Patriae titles that were last officially held by Julia Domna some twenty-five years earlier. It is unlikely that all the milestones were overseen by the emperor, only that he was funding them. There is a cluster of imperial milestones – i.e., those in which the imperial titles appear in the nominative – in North Africa and a few outliers in the Pannonian region. Most notably there are hardly any known dedications in the Italian peninsula other than a single inscription dedicated to Otacilia Severa and both Philips (Figure 41).²³⁸

²³⁷ Anne Kolb, "Communications and Mobility in the Roman Empire," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, ed. Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson, (Oxford University Press, 2014), 657.

²³⁸ *CIL* 11, 6107.

Distribution of Milestones Dedicated to Otacilia Severa



Figure 40. Distribution of **Milestones** Dedicated to Otacilia Severa

Distribution of Inscriptions Dedicated to Otacilia Severa



Figure 41. Distribution of Inscriptions Dedicated to Otacilia Severa. Anonymous dedications are filtered out.

Although Philip chose not to issue coinage that featured his wife with the titles of Mater Castrorum, Mater Senatus, and Mater Patriae, Otacilia is celebrated as Mater Augusti, Mater

Caesaris, Mater Patriae, and Mater Senatus on inscriptions. The Mater Augusti title appears on 13 inscriptions, five of which are dedicated by civic entities, one by the imperial administration, five by the imperial domus, and two by the military in the city of Aquincum in modern Hungary. Only four inscriptions celebrate the empress as Mater Caesaris and they mainly appear on imperial milestones and one for which we cannot detect a dedicant. Mater Patriae is predominantly found on imperial milestones, on one military milestone, and on two anonymous inscriptions, for a total of 10 occurrences. The title Mater Senatus appears on 12 inscriptions, 7 of which (58%) are imperial milestones.

In addition to Otacilia being honored with traditional metaphorical motherhood titles, the empress was celebrated with a new honorific, Sanctissima (the most holy). The title has divine overtones which casts the empress in a sacrosanct light.²³⁹ The title first appears on an inscription honoring Tranquillina, followed by Otacilia Severa, Herrennia Etruscilla, and Cornelia Salonina.²⁴⁰ Sanctissima never appears on coinage for any of the imperial women, indicating that this was an unofficial title. Milestones are the predominant medium on which the Sanctissima title appears (Figure 42).

²³⁹ Ricciardi, "Where Did All the Women Go," 101.

²⁴⁰ Tranquillina (*CIL* 9, 1458), Herrennia Etruscilla (*CIL* 6, 2831), and Cornelia Salonina (*CIL* 11, 3577).

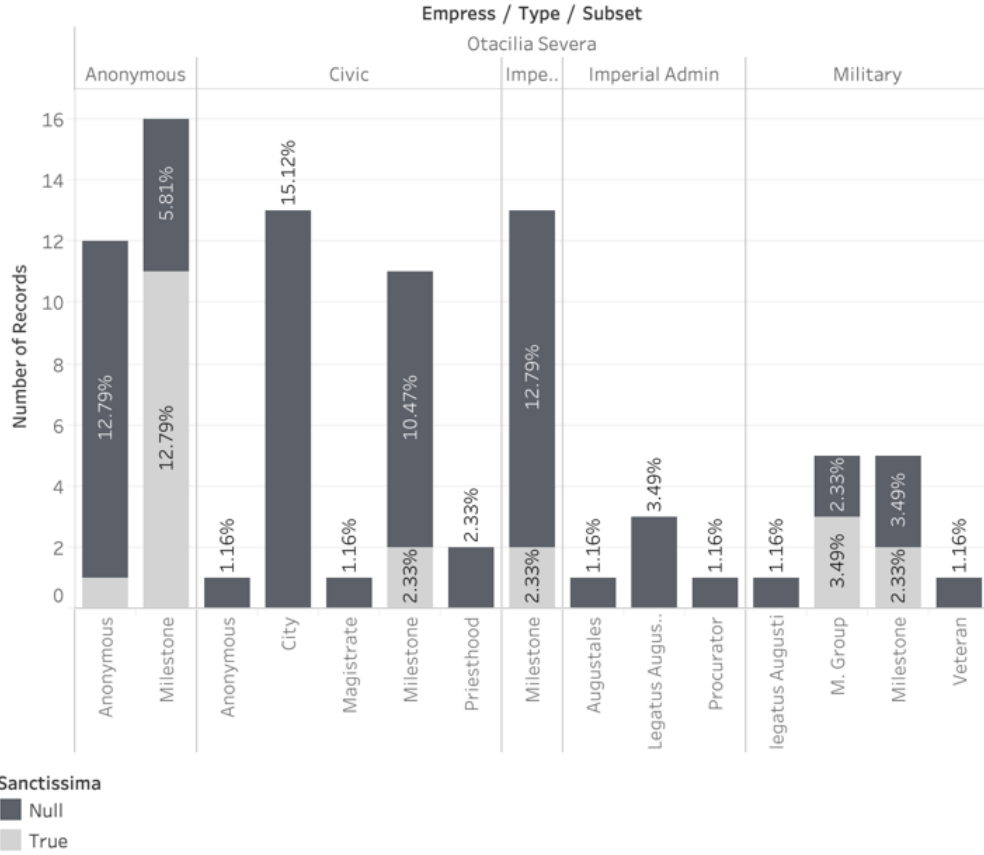


Figure 42. Otacilia Severa as Sanctissima. “True” indicates the number of records that mention Sanctissima, while “Null” are the rest of the inscription types that do not mention the title. This graph demonstrates how many inscriptions employ the title within their types and subsets.

One of the more unique inscriptions located in Amorion, Asia (Turkey) was dedicated to the empress by Tiberius Claudius Marcellinus, a Roman knight and veteran. The inscription was dedicated to the empress alone who is celebrated as the mother of Philip and of the camp.²⁴¹ He honored the empress as the most holy Augusta wife of our (their) lord Philip Augustus and mother of Philip and mother of the camp. Tiberius made the dedication on the occasion of refurbishing his own bathhouse. It is difficult to know how to interpret this inscription. Perhaps it

²⁴¹ CIL 3, 8113: *pro salute Marciae Otaciliae Severae sanctissimae Augustae coniugis domini nostri Philippi Augusti et matris Philippi nobilissimi Caesaris et castrorum domum suam et balneum refecit et paravit Tiberius Claudius Marcellinus eques Romanus dec(---) IIII(?) [---] Marc-? Aurel-? Un[---] dec(---) V[---]*

was erected like this because he was unable to erect anything grander on behalf of the imperial house.

Although third century mints and emperors no longer awarded any of the metaphorical motherhood titles to their wives, subjects must have believed in the power behind these titles long after Julia Domna. As the number of dedications decrease throughout the century beginning with Otacilia Severa, subjects continued the tradition of celebrating the empress by her metaphorical motherhood title and other titles that described her relationship to her son. By erecting dedications to the *Mater Castrorum*, subjects may have been expressing hope that the empress would send military assistance to those who needed it, though it seems more likely that they understood the title had something to do with dynastic succession. Very likely, subjects considered the other metaphorical motherhood titles awarded by the Senate, the *Mater Senatus* and *Mater Patriae* titles, as referring to the empress's importance in maintaining peace inside the imperial *domus*, ensuring stability within the state through the continuation of the dynasty. Most notably, all of Otacilia's dedications appear on inscriptions outside of Rome. It seems like most of Philip's support came from civic entities in the ancient city of Serdica, honoring him for repairing the main Roman military road that began in Singidunum and ended in Serdica and was important to economic life in the Balkans.²⁴²

One possible explanation for the decline in dedications may have something to do with the political upheavals, usurpers, economic constraints, and civil wars throughout the third century. The decline of dedications could be a direct result of how costly they were in a period in which the economy was on the verge of collapsing. It may also be a reflection of the lack of coinage issued for third century empresses resulting in fewer subjects responding. As military

²⁴² Anne Kolb, *Roman Roads: New Evidence, New Perspectives* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 252-71.

victories became important factors in selecting new emperors, the celebrations of imperial women decreased significantly with each empress until they were virtually invisible in the epigraphic record from 285 to 305 under Diocletian.

Inscriptions Dedicated to Galeria Valeria

Although several third century emperors sought to establish their own dynasties, battles over succession rarely ended in their favor. When Diocletian devised the Tetrarchy, he had no son and so rejected inherited succession in favor of a college of emperors who had successful military backgrounds. The exclusion of the natural sons of Diocletian's Caesars (and thus, the significance of their mothers) persisted until Galerius was formally recognized as Augustus of the East at the Conference of Carnuntum in 308. It was during this Conference that Galerius honored his wife with the Augusta honorific to legitimate his authority in the East. The Augusta title reflects her status as daughter of Diocletian and prominent role as Galerius' wife. The special honor bestowed by the title Augusta had not been awarded since the period of Faustina the Younger. Galeria Valeria was the only Tetrarchic woman celebrated on official media with this honorific.

Galeria Valeria is celebrated on four extant inscriptions in the eastern half of the empire: two anonymous dedications and one inscription dedicated by a city and a provincial governor each (Figure 43). She is listed as Mater Castrorum in all four texts, even though she was not celebrated as such on coinage. The appearance of the Mater Castrorum title suggests that subjects wanted a smooth transition of power.

Distribution of Inscriptions Dedicated to Galeria Valeria

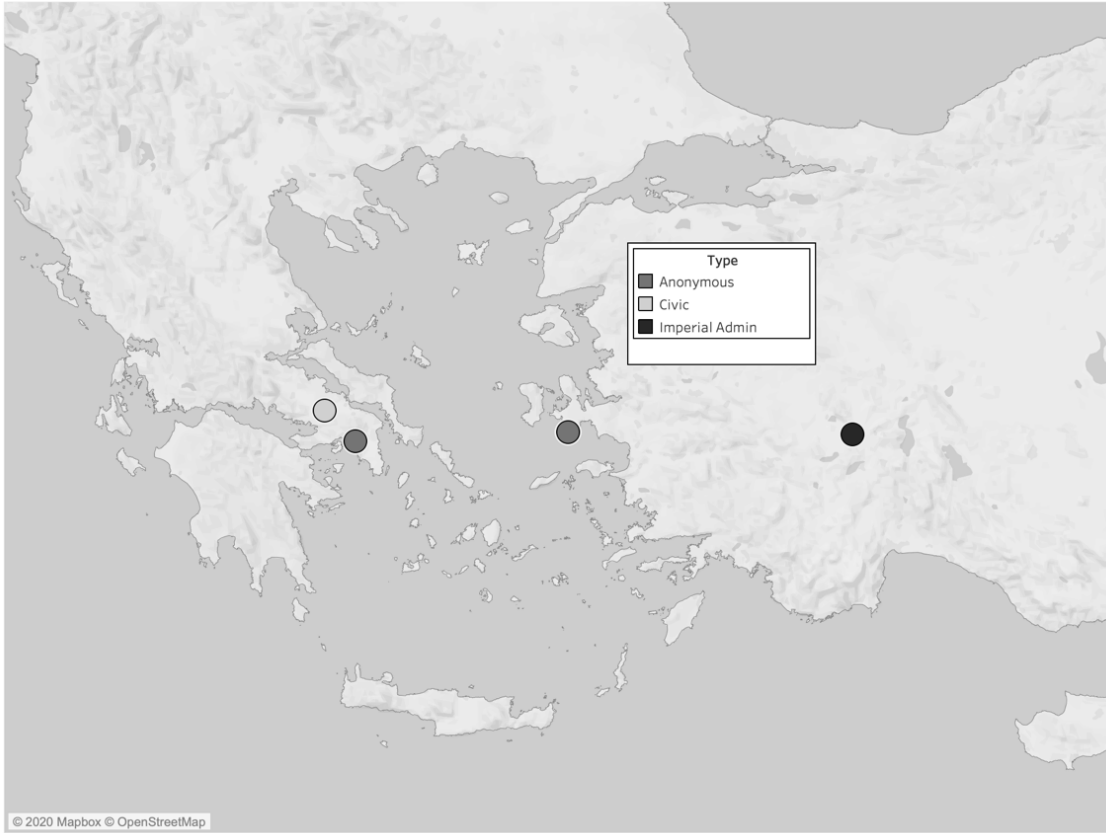


Figure 43. Distribution of Inscriptions Dedicated to Galeria Valeria

Of the four inscriptions that survive, two appear on statue bases, one inscription appears on a recut milestone, and the last on an unknown medium. The first statue base was erected by Valerius Diogenes, a *Vir Perfectissimus* and priest in the ancient city of Apamea Ciboton (in modern Turkey).²⁴³ Valerius addresses the empress as the most holy and pious Augusta (*sacratissimae ac piissimae Augustae*) and Mother of the Camp. Like Otacilia, there are divine overtones in this new title, reflecting her piety. The second statue base was dedicated by the city of Thebes in Greece and addresses Galeria as *δέσποιναν* (mistress).²⁴⁴ A recut milestone located

²⁴³ *CIL* 3, 13661.

²⁴⁴ *IG* VII 2503.

in the village of Mandra near Eleusis is dedicated to Constantius, Galerius, Galeria, and other officials.²⁴⁵

It is unclear why subjects continued the practice of celebrating the empress as Mater Castrorum as late as 313, two years after her coins were taken out of circulation. While some subjects may have continued believing in the imagined relationship between the empress and military, I suspect that most employed the title to publicly express their loyalty to Galerius, the most powerful of the Augusti. It is possible that in the minds of the populace, the title recalled a sense of peace and security that they hoped still existed under the Antonines, especially in a period characterized by political instability and wars. Indeed, the Mater Castrorum title may have reminded subjects of the better days. Because of her perceived influence as an Augusta, however, Licinius sought to eliminate her and other challengers to the throne (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 51). With her execution in 315, so too died the Mater Castrorum title and other imperial honorifics bestowed on earlier empresses.

Conclusion

Although emperors no longer officially awarded their wives with the metaphorical motherhood titles that the Severan women enjoyed, subjects continued celebrating empresses with these titles and epithets. The dedications reflect an individual's or group consent to the negotiation of dynastic ideology, while simultaneously exemplifying the transactional nature of imperial rule. They celebrated the emperor and his family on statue bases, buildings, milestones, and other tabulae. Inscriptions present us an opportunity to hear from people who are largely

²⁴⁵ IG II² 5203: Galeria is referred to as Mater Castrorum which is rendered in Greek as μητέρα κάστρων (*mētera kastrōn*).

silent in literary sources and their self-presentation in epigraphic evidence. Because dedicatory inscriptions are subject responses to imperial propaganda, it is likely that dedicants were not as candid concerning their opinions as we might hope. It is important to remember that these inscriptions ought to be treated with the same caution that scholars treat panegyric. When inscriptions are found out of context, as they usually are, we cannot say much about them, who dedicated them, and in our case, we are not always certain of the medium on which they appear. What remains of the inscriptions is still useful in determining how subjects responded to the emperor's propaganda and how receptive they were to the empress and her role in the Palace.

In the next chapter, I focus exclusively on the responses of those who are largely silent and omitted in literary and epigraphic evidence. Women of all social background and ages interacted with imperial propaganda. They responded to imperial propaganda in their own unique and meaningful ways by mimicking the empress' euergetism, virtues, hairstyle, and dress.

CHAPTER 3: DETECTING THE FEMININE VOICE

After having explored three approaches to the advertisement of imperial women to promote dynastic succession in Chapter One and the responses of various male subjects to this dynastic propaganda in Chapter Two, I turn my attention now to women's responses to images of the empresses.

The emperor and his imperial administration surely envisioned men as the primary audience for state art and propaganda. It was they after all who managed local government and imperial offices. Indeed, the epigraphic record of men's responses to imperial propaganda far outweighs those of women.²⁴⁶ Yet it was not only men who scrutinized empresses and encountered their images in daily life. While this propaganda was surely designed to appeal to its primary audience of men, women also scrutinized imperial women. Scholars have long noted that Roman women imitated the empress's hairstyle and dress.²⁴⁷ Whether this was a question of fashion, a bid for greater personal prestige through association with the imperial house, a demonstration of political support for the empress and succession, or all of the above remains unclear and likely depended on the individual.²⁴⁸ Hairstyle was the most obvious way in which Roman women imitated empresses, but it seems likely that, as Susan Wood posited, the empress's images may have evoked a sense of maternal duty in Roman women and encouraged

²⁴⁶ Maria Letizia Caldelli, "Women in the Roman World," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, ed. Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 582.

²⁴⁷ Liza Cleland et al, *Greek and Roman Dress from A to Z*. Ancient World from A to Z (London: Routledge, 2007), 67; 87-7.

²⁴⁸ Wood, *Imperial Women*, 1.

them to model themselves after her. They, like the empress, promoted the stability of the empire through their concern for the well-being and prosperity of their own children.²⁴⁹ The empress was also a model for women who attained power beyond the *domus* often through euergetism (civic munificence), priesthoods, and patronage of *collegia*. Their gifts and priesthoods earned them public recognition, the respect of their community and, quite possibly, acknowledgement by the imperial administration.

This chapter examines the evidence of women's responses to imperial propaganda. Accessing these responses can only be achieved through material evidence, mostly personal objects, since the feminine voice is largely silent in ancient literature. Despite this, women do appear in the epigraphic record as priestesses and patronesses. We might also detect the feminine voice in occasional images of imperial mothers that appear on personal items owned by girls and women such as dolls, cameos, seals, hairpins and jewelry. Such trappings suggest that their possessors enjoyed a degree of wealth, and perhaps imagined that the possession of such items lent them an air of respectability. Perhaps they allowed the possessor to claim for herself the luxury of the court or the qualities attributed to the empress in official media. These nods to the empress are found largely in personal items that would never have caught the imperial eye; nor were they necessarily political statements.

Some scholars have suggested that the implements and process of beautification became a means of expressing personal power and pride, the only way possible since they were kept from expressing their excellence in the same fashion that men did. Instead, they enhanced their family's reputation through their appearance and possessions.²⁵⁰ The women or girls may have

²⁴⁹ Wood, *Imperial Women*, 2.

²⁵⁰ Fanny Dolansky, "Playing with Gender: Girls, Dolls, and Adult Ideals in the Roman World," *Classical Antiquity* 31, no. 2 (2012): 270.

purchased or commissioned such things for themselves or they may have been gifts. Even if we could ascertain that these items were gifts or offerings, there is no way to know whether the recipient interpreted the object in the same way as the giver.

Past scholarship has privileged stone portraiture over dolls and intaglios, and, because of the desire to use hairstyle as a tool for relative chronology, has focused more on its typology than motivations behind its adoption.²⁵¹ In this chapter, I explore the extent to which imperial women were seen as role models for girls and women, especially through the adoption of imperial hairstyles and their depictions in ancient dolls. I will also consider inscriptions erected by elite women that mention the empress and seem to model her euergetism. The evidence for feminine responses to propaganda does not lend itself well to quantitative analysis. Women's responses are varied and, in literature, are colored by elite male perspectives. For this reason, I employ a more heuristic model, imagining what the possession of such items communicated about the self-presentation of the owner. Jewelry and sartorial accessories can tell us something of the possessor's social status.²⁵² These personalized objects, stylistic choices, and self-presentation shed light on an individual's social standing as well as their responses to imperial women in propaganda.

²⁵¹ Two studies on hair include Susan Wood, "Subject and Artist: Studies in Roman Portraiture of the Third Century," *American Journal of Archaeology* 85, no. 1 (1981): 59–68 and K. Fittschen, *Die Bildnistypen der Faustina Minor und die Fecunditas Augustae*. Vadenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1982.

²⁵² Kelly Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman: Self-Presentation and Society* (London: Routledge, 2008), 11, Ebook Central (EBL).

Badges of Femininity

The ubiquity of the empress's images in official media meant that she was likely recognizable by all her subjects, even though in most cases they would never have seen her in person. Her role in imperial succession propaganda, especially when associated with virtues such as Pudicitia or Fecunditas invited scrutiny even of her body and sexual continence. It is difficult to ascertain how much agency imperial women had over their images in state art, and it may well have varied considerably from one empress to another. Likely just as varied were likely the interpretations of the empress's image. While men may have been sensitive to the dynastic aspect of the empress's image, women probably saw significantly more. The empress's choices of hairstyle, jewelry, and clothing conveyed meaning to those around her, just as the emperor's sartorial choices did. We are beginning to understand better the coded messages in men's sartorial statements thanks in part to studies of Roman masculinity, but women's expressions are still mostly inaccessible to us. Indeed, most of the surviving literature is written by men about women and thus are unreliable guides to women's perspectives.²⁵³ Equally difficult is interpreting girls' and women's responses to the empress's image. When elite Roman women imitated the empress, were their choices an expression of personal importance? Or were they based on politics, or aesthetics, or perhaps a combination of all three? Did young girls and non-elite women identify with the empress when they imitated her hairstyle and fashion choices, or did they see her as a suitable role model for their behavior?

²⁵³ This is as true of ancient literature as modern scholarship. Maud Gleason on Frontinus' manual in *Making Men* and Michel Foucault in the *History of Sexuality* Vol. 2. When men do mention women's clothing it is usually for purposes of seduction (Propertius and Catullus). How women sized each other up through sartorial choices is completely inaccessible to us.

Before continuing any further, it is necessary to establish a methodological framework in exploring Roman self-presentation through material culture. Dress and fashion theory consider how individuals construct self-identity through clothing and personal adornment, functioning as non-verbal communication.²⁵⁴ Other modifications to the body such as cosmetics, tattoos, hairstyle, and other accessories convey coded messages as well. In the field of sociology, Roach-Higgins and Eicher urged social scientists to use the term dress rather than clothing, adornment, and costume. They argued that dress can be applied across all cultures and nationalities because it is unambiguous and free of cultural and social biases. Roach-Higgins defined dress compared to appearance, adornment/ ornament, clothing, apparel, costume, and fashion, and explains why dress is a more suitable term to use in scholarship, since adornment “imposes restrictive value judgements regarding aesthetic quality which the term does not.”²⁵⁵ In anthropology, however, dress and adornment are used interchangeably to mean a more general type of function rather something as specific as fashion or costume.²⁵⁶ There is no clear consensus on the definition of fashion and adornment.

Together, dress and adornment give meaning to bodies and convey the wearer’s gender, social status, wealth, and profession in their community.²⁵⁷ At the same time, dress is not a stable indicator of social status, since clothing and adornment can easily be adopted to suggest things that may not necessarily be true about the wearer.²⁵⁸ Indeed, Ovid portrayed women’s dress,

²⁵⁴ Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 6; Mireille M. Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1;19-23.

²⁵⁵ M.E. Roach-Higgins, and J. Eicher. “Dress and Identity” in *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 10 no. 4 (1992): 1-3

²⁵⁶ Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Social Theory*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000), 57-8. In this dissertation, I employ the anthropological definition of dress and adornment when discussing women’s self-presentation.

²⁵⁷ Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 6; Lee, *Body, Dress, and Identity in Ancient Greece*, 1; Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, 32.

²⁵⁸ Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 1.

cosmetics, and adornment as deceptive tools women used to improve their appearance and conceal their flaws (Ov. *Ars.* 3.159-60; 257-62). Similarly, since dress, body, and self are inextricably entwined with personal identity, dress alone cannot convey how clothing would have been worn, who wore it, and, most importantly, how the wearer might have felt wearing the items they chose.²⁵⁹ Ultimately, the body serves as a medium on which cultural meanings are externally conveyed.²⁶⁰

Livy records an exchange between M. Porcius Cato and Lucius Valerius in 195 BCE that reveals a range of male attitudes towards women and their self-presentation. Valerius and another Tribune of the Plebs proposed repealing the *Lex Oppia*, a sumptuary law passed at the height of the Second Punic War in 215 BCE that limited the amount of gold women could wear in public. As consul, Cato spoke against this proposal, claiming that the law was passed in order to keep women restrained in their comforts, and he warned that women's opulence and avarice were akin to pestilential diseases that destroy great cities. Expenditures on costly luxuries pitted aristocratic women against one other, striving to own objects that others could not afford. It also encouraged the poor who imitated their betters to live beyond their means. The tribune Valerius offered a revealing counterargument. Because women were prohibited from holding public office or serving in the military, he maintained that women could only distinguish themselves by "badges of femininity" (*feminarum insignia*), specifically through their elegance (*munditiae*), adornment (*ornatus*), and the cultivation and care of their bodies (*cultus*). These were characteristics that revealed a woman's social status, prestige, and individuality (Liv. *AUC* 34.7.9). These badges of femininity allowed Roman women to display the spoils of war in equal measure with their men; denying them to Roman women deprived them of displaying their

²⁵⁹ Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body*, 34; 36-8.

²⁶⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, Routledge, 2006), 12.

superiority over women of allied nations. Valerius was no feminist, however. He conceded that women's weakness for material items required close supervision, but he argued that husbands and fathers should fill that role rather than the state. Indeed, women's appearance conveyed not only their individual rank, wealth and social status, but was also the prestige of her husband, father, and sons.²⁶¹ Denying women their personal adornment would compel them to rebel against their men, thus threatening social order. Ultimately, for Valerius, the repeal of the law ensured domestic harmony by granting Roman women the tokens that allowed them to distinguish themselves from their political inferiors (Liv. *AUC* 34).

Cato's sentiments were echoed and amplified by Seneca the Younger some two centuries later. For him, women's ostentatious displays were wasteful and proud. Cosmetics, jewelry, elaborate wigs, and hairstyles were frivolous distractions that kept women away from their duties of maintaining the household and tending to the family (Sen. *Cons. Helv.* 11.16.3). If a woman spent her husband's income on luxury items and invested too much time into her appearance, it not only threatened her husband's public stature but also the work ethic of the empire.²⁶² Seneca considered such devotion to self-presentation as morally corrupt and dangerous because it led to competition and chaos, which threatened familial and civil harmony (Sen. *Contr.* 2.5.7).

The most visible and powerful women were empresses. For elite women, imitating the euergetism of imperial wives instilled in them a sense of patronage within the greater community and empire. Personal adornment and beautification were keys to a woman's social mobility and endowed her with a level of prestige in her community. The personal items that I will discuss below were surely designed to capture some degree of an empress's celebrated qualities, her authority, wealth, or privilege, and claim them for the possessors. Women responded to the

²⁶¹ Wyke, "Woman in the Mirror," 140; Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 5.

²⁶² Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 89.

image of the empress in official media in several different ways, each reflective in some way of how the girl or woman wished to present herself, or how the gift giver wished her to be.

Keeping up with the Empresses

Ancient literature depicts the domestic sphere as the realm of women, an area where they were expected to wield control and influence. The same sources, however, are harshly critical of women who enter the world of politics and public life, considering it a transgression.²⁶³ Women are present in the public space still, though, and so dress and adornment represent the avenue for women to demonstrate their standing and persona in this environment without impinging on the working and political nature of male-dominated public life. Within the household, however, women were expected to exert a degree of control and influence. Personal adornment and bodily care were acceptable ways in which non-imperial women could demonstrate their social standing in the public space. Imperial women did not confine themselves solely to the *domus*, but acted as patrons and imperial priestesses, and benefactors who financed public buildings and being trend-setters in beauty and aesthetics.²⁶⁴ In particular, they took up the habit of rebuilding and constructing temples for the public good. The empress was supposed to model for priestesses and patrons how to engage in public life and gain a degree of power without transgressing gender or social norms.

²⁶³ T. Hillard, "On the Stage, Behind the Curtain: Images of Politically Active Women in the Late Roman Republic," in *Stereotypes of Women in Power: Historical Perspectives and Revisionist Views*, eds. B. Garlick, S. Dixon, and P. Allen, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 37–64.

²⁶⁴ Livia served as a priestess in the Cult of the Divine Augustus. (Cass. Dio. 56.46.1); *Puellae Faustinae* and Faustina as the patroness (*HA Marc.* 26.6); On building patronage, see below.

Under the Republic, the erection of public buildings had been limited to elite men and was permitted only by decree of the senate.²⁶⁵ Under Augustus, however, several new buildings were erected through the munificence of Livia and Octavia Minor.²⁶⁶ Rather chauvinistically, Suetonius suggests that Augustus allowed the women's names to grace his building projects rather than the women underwriting the projects themselves (*Aug.* 29.4).²⁶⁷ Fragments of the supposed architrave inscription of the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris, for example, name Livia, daughter of Drusus and wife of Augustus, as the dedicator.²⁶⁸ Rebuilding the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris conformed well with Augustus' religious and social programs, but I do not find it unthinkable that the empress funded the temple on her own. She may even have come up with the idea to do so independently of her husband. Two centuries later, and on the same architrave, Septimius Severus claimed that his whole *domus* refurbished the temple, not just the empress, Julia Domna.²⁶⁹ Yet, we find Julia Domna as the sole dedicator of another building on a dedicatory tabula found near the Forum of Trajan. Here, Julia Domna is named as the Mater Augustorum and Mater Castrorum, the restorer of a building erected for the matrons dated to 209 and 211.²⁷⁰ The simplest explanation for the difference in the Severan inscriptions is that money

²⁶⁵ C. Gorrie, "Julia Domna's Building Patronage, Imperial Family Roles and the Severan Revival of Moral Legislation," *Historia* 53 (2004): 61–72; C. Gorrie, "The Restoration of the Porticus Octaviae and Severan Imperial Policy," *G&R* 54 (2007): 1–17. Julie Langford, "Dio and the Dowager Empresses, Part 1: Livia, the Senate and Succession," in *Cassius Dio the Historian: Methods and Approaches*, edited by Carsten Hjort Lange and Jesper Majbom Madsen, Brill, forthcoming.

²⁶⁶ Wood, *Imperial Wives*, 33: Livia and Octavia Minor were patronesses of several building projects, including the Porticus Octaviae. Suetonius states that Augustus commissioned the Porticus under Livia and Octavia's names (*Sue. Aug.* 29.4).

²⁶⁷ *Quaedam etiam opera sub nomine alieno, nepotum scilicet et uxoris sororisque fecit, ut porticum basilicamque Gai et Luci, item porticus Liviae et Octaviae theatrumque Marcelli.*

²⁶⁸ *CIL* 6, 883: Nicholas Purcell suggested that this inscription demonstrated a degree of the empress's independence since she identified herself first as daughter and only secondarily as wife. N. Purcell, "Livia and the Womanhood of Rome," *PCPS* XXXII (1986): 78–105. Langford has demonstrated, however, that this was the usual convention employed for women in Late Republican epitaphs. Langford, "Dio and the Dowager Empresses."

²⁶⁹ Langford ("Dio and the Dowager Empresses") argues that Severus chose to refurbish the temple as a family rather than allowing Domna to do it by herself because of the history of the temple's matrons striking out on their own to solve military and political problems when men were incapable or unwilling to do so.

²⁷⁰ *CIL* 6, 997: *Iulia Aug(usta) mater Aug(ustorum) et castrorum / Matronis restituit / Sabina Aug(usta) / Matronis*

for the restorations of the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris came from the emperor's coffers, whereas Julia Domna paid for the restoration of the building herself.

This suggestion – that we take seriously the reports of empresses as patrons, benefactors, and builders – is strengthened considerably by elite women across the empire following the empresses' leads. Elite women had performed local acts of euergetism by financing building and public works projects, holding civic and imperial priesthods, and serving as benefactresses, patronesses, and “mothers” of cities and *collegia*.²⁷¹ These activities not only enhanced the reputations and prestige of the benefactresses, but also of their families.²⁷² Female benefactors distinguished themselves within their communities by their display of wealth, generosity, and influence.²⁷³ They also fostered competition among other elites, and promoted feelings of gratitude toward the local elites by the general populace.²⁷⁴

The *Aedificium Eumachiae* in Pompeii is one such example of a large building complex patronized under the priestess Eumachia and her son in the early first century CE.²⁷⁵ Following the exempla of Livia, Eumachia dedicated this complex to Concordia to promote her son M. Numistrius Fronto among the elite and general populations (*Ov. Fast.* 6.637-40).²⁷⁶ Since these buildings would have been used and seen by many people, dedicated public buildings bearing the

²⁷¹ *CIL* 6, 2177, *AE* 1993, 477, *CIL* 11, 1355.

²⁷² Emily A. Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives, Public Personae: Women and Civic Life in the Roman West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 53-56.

²⁷³ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 227. Hemelrijk investigates provincial women from the late first century BCE to third century CE. She looks at inscriptions erected by women in Roman towns outside of Rome, particularly those that spoke Latin. Mainly those in Italy, Spain, northern Africa, and Gaul—some in the Balkan and Danube regions.

²⁷⁴ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 227. Hemelrijk investigates provincial women from the late first century BCE to third century CE. She looks at inscriptions erected by women in Roman towns outside of Rome, particularly those that spoke Latin. This included towns in Italy, Spain, northern Africa, and Gaul as well as some in the Balkan and Danube regions.

²⁷⁵ *CIL* 10, 810: Kristian Reinfjord, “Communicating Conspicuous Consumption in Roman Pompeii,” in *Rivista di Studi Pompeiani* 22 (2011): 18; Hemelrijk records information on three inscriptions attributed to Eumachia: a statue base (*CIL* 10, 813), a frieze (*CIL* 10, 810-811), and a third inscription behind an architrave (*CIL* 10, 812). For more, see Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 348.

²⁷⁶ Livia dedicated her building to promote Tiberius. Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 169.

names of private donors made them “potent arenas for promotion.”²⁷⁷ Public goods and services were beneficial in courting the general populace’s favor and reception.

Imperial priesthoods were even more prestigious, offering elite women recognition.²⁷⁸ Membership in imperial cults offered opportunities to advance socially and politically. In the provinces, imperial priestesses were elected by the provincial council to preside over the cult of the living and deified empress.²⁷⁹ Similarly to Eumachia, the Augustan priestess Mamia dedicated a temple to the Genius of Augustus in the forum of Pompeii between 7 BCE and 4 CE.²⁸⁰ Priesthoods enhanced a woman’s social standing and allowed her to move through public free from whispers or innuendos since priesthoods did not compromise the traditional values associated with femininity.²⁸¹

Civic benevolence is the exchange between the benefactor providing the public goods and the beneficiaries who express their gratitude in the form of public honors. Wealthy benefactors participated in this network of gift-exchange to guarantee civic harmony between the ruling elite and non-elite populations.²⁸² Benefactresses financed infrastructure, venues for entertainment (theaters and circuses), religious structures, baths, libraries, games, theatre performances, and public banquets.²⁸³ Erecting public statues for religious purposes or to demonstrate loyalty to the imperial *domus* was also considered an act of public munificence.²⁸⁴ Female benefactresses, like men, dedicated and funded architectural and infrastructural projects

²⁷⁷ Reinfjord, “Communicating Conspicuous Consumption in Roman Pompeii,” 19.

²⁷⁸ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 72; 106-7.

²⁷⁹ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 71-2; 75-7.

²⁸⁰ *AE* 2003, 315; Reinfjord, “Communicating Conspicuous Consumption in Roman Pompeii,” 18; Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 41; 169. Mamia constructed the temple to celebrate her *genius*, the first family to become magistrates of Pompeii, and the emperor. For more, see Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, Oxford Classical Monographs, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.

²⁸¹ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 103-4.

²⁸² Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 112.

²⁸³ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 116; 170.

²⁸⁴ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 134.

under their own names and those of their family. These acts earned them social distinctions and privileges that guaranteed the preservation of their memory and personal gratification in contributing to the beautification of their city.²⁸⁵

In the Mediterranean world, patrons and patronesses were selected based on social ranking and their social and economic ties to the cities they patronized.²⁸⁶ Patronesses acted on behalf of client communities, giving them resources with the expectation that clients would respond favorably with honors and other forms of gratitude. “Mothers” of cities and *collegia* functioned similarly to imperial mothers of state institutions in which the relationship demonstrated the honorand’s merit and reinforced the hierarchical relationship between common citizens and members of the elite.²⁸⁷ The mother of a city, like the *Mater Patriae*, bridged the gap between the elites and average citizens by providing money for public goods and services and by representing the average citizens in religious ceremonies.²⁸⁸ A statue dedicated to the priestess Numisia Secunda Sabina honors her as *Mater Municipii et Coloniae* for donating money to the people of Interamnia Praetuttiorum, northwest of Rome.²⁸⁹

As metaphorical mothers of cities, *collegia*, and other social institutions, female patrons were seen as protectors over their cities, fostering a familial relationship between the “mother” and her “children,” the non-elite citizens. These civic motherhood titles are very familiar to the metaphorical motherhood titles awarded to empresses. It is possible that civic motherhood titles were responses to imperial propaganda that emphasized women’s importance, as much as it was the imperial women laying down a framework for public interaction. Ultimately, women who

²⁸⁵ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 166.

²⁸⁶ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 228; 251.

²⁸⁷ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 253; 255.

²⁸⁸ Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives*, 257.

²⁸⁹ *AE* 1998 (2001), 416.

funded massive building projects and other public projects improved the quality of life for the citizens and favorability of the city to the imperial administration.²⁹⁰ Women involved in civic life enjoyed a degree of respect and prestige that they learned through modeling the behavior of imperial women. The evidence in this section demonstrates that elite women responded to imperial propaganda about the empress in several meaningful ways that benefited their communities as well as themselves. Other women either did not have the means or were not interested in developing a public persona. They might opt to respond to the image of the empress more superficially – for example, by mimicking her hairstyle or by wearing jewelry that included her image.

“I am my Hair”

It is sometimes said that imperial women were the fashion icons of their day.²⁹¹ Their images, and those of female deities with whom they were associated, appeared in a wide array of media that most Roman women and girls would have encountered in daily life. Wanting to present themselves in the best light in social circles, non-imperial women adopted some of the hairstyles of imperial women and were thus able to identify in some small way with royalty. Roman women adopted the hairstyles or wigs of the empress as well as accessories and personal objects decorated with her image. Indeed, because women followed the hairstyles so closely, it is often possible to date women’s portraiture to within a decade.²⁹² Nonetheless, women adapted

²⁹⁰ Brenda Longfellow, “Female Patrons and Honorific Statues in Pompeii,” in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 59/60 (2014): 81.

²⁹¹ Cleland et al, *Greek and Roman Dress A-Z*, 85-7.

²⁹² Elizabeth Bartman, “Hair and the Artifice of Roman Female Adornment,” in *American Journal of Archaeology* 105 (2001): 1-25

these recognizable styles to communicate their age, social status, and role within society.²⁹³

Hairstyle and wigs, like cosmetics and jewelry, are an artificial adornment that highlighted the subject's beauty and can be put on or taken off.²⁹⁴ Wigs in particular concealed the subject's real hair and could be removed for sleeping and thus allowed, with maintenance, the intricacies of the style to last indefinitely. As exempla of female modesty and motherhood, imperial women inspired other women to follow suit and maintain their *cultus* (bodily care/refinement) in various ways and the use of wigs aided this process.

While it is evident from surviving material evidence that elite women styled their hair after women of the imperial court, we cannot absolutely confirm whether they wore these hairstyles in daily life, but these styles were possible to recreate.²⁹⁵ Empresses were trendsetters, and imitating their look served to mark a woman's social status, cultural values, and public role.²⁹⁶ Hair was styled accordingly to a woman's physiognomy in a way to enhance her beauty or possibly conceal some of her less attractive features. Although one might expect that the practice of wearing wigs and hairstyles fashioned after imperial women was exclusive to elite women, it was not. Generally speaking, women from all social classes imitated imperial hairstyles, the exception being that elite women had slaves to style their hair and wore them for

²⁹³ As Bartman states, young girls' hair was usually long and cascaded loosely onto their back whereas mature women usually had their hair styled and maintained to some degree. Bartman, "Hair and the Artifice of Roman Female Adornment," 5.

²⁹⁴ Eve D'Ambra, "Nudity and Adornment in Female Portrait Sculpture of the Second Century AD," in *I Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society*, ed. Diana E. E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 110.

²⁹⁵ Bartman, "Hair and the Artifice of Roman Female Adornment," 8.

²⁹⁶ Bartman, "Hair and the Artifice of Roman Female Adornment," 22.

particular occasions.²⁹⁷ Women mimicked the hairstyles of imperial ladies because it bespoke a level of sophistication, elegance, and modesty that non-imperial women sought to emulate.²⁹⁸

Elite women are among the most represented visually with hairstyles of imperial women. A fragment of a marble sarcophagus dated to 190-210 CE commemorates an unidentified older woman (Figure 44) with the hairstyle of Julia Domna. Her age is indicated by the heaviness around her cheeks and mouth, the line across the forehead, and heavy-lidded eyes. The woman's hair is styled in a *Helmsfrisur* ("helmet coiffure") resembling the look of Julia Domna and Plautilla. A marble sarcophagus was a significant expense beyond the range of most of Roman society.



Figure 44. Sarcophagus fragment of an unknown woman. Image credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art 27.122.31.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Bartman, "Hair and the Artifice of Roman Female Adornment," 8, n. 45.

²⁹⁸ Slave girls may have been adorned, but it depends on their masters. They may have done up their hair, but not to the extent elite women had their hair styled as. Elaborate hairstyles require more time and resources that slave girls would have. For more, see Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 43.

²⁹⁹ All images were used within the **Creative Commons** unless stated otherwise.
[metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/252946](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/252946)

The expense suggests that the deceased was a wealthy woman who may have commissioned the piece before her death or had relatives who did so afterwards. In either case, however, it was important to the family that the woman appear stylish, and furthermore, that her hairstyle called to mind that of the imperial women Julia Domna and Plautilla. Perhaps the choice of coiffure was a statement of political allegiance to the imperial domus, or maybe it was an expression of the woman's elegance and sophistication, but it could simply be a matter of personal aesthetics. The intentional blurring between the woman and the empress invited the viewer to link the deceased with the empress. Like the elite women who patterned their patronage or priesthoods after the empress, the sarcophagus accomplished several objectives at the same time: it promoted the deceased and her surviving family by connecting them visually with the imperial house while impressing locals with stylish awareness.

The late second century has a good range of sculptures of women with their hair styled after Julia Domna. Currently on display in the Vatican are three additional portraits of an unknown provenance. Each portray non-imperial women styled with Julia Domna's iconic *Helmsfrisur*. The first head is dated to 220-230 CE and looks strikingly similar to the empress in her facial features and hairstyle with two strands of hair peeking around her ears (Figure 45). The second head, dated to the same period, features a woman with puffy cheeks and eyes, likely an older woman, whose wig is lifted slightly to show the gap between her wig and face (Figure 46). The third and final head is dated earlier at 200-220 CE (Figure 47). It is difficult to determine if the third subject is wearing a wig or if her natural hair is styled as is.



Figures 45-47. Anonymous women with the stylized coiffure of Julia Domna in Musei Vaticani. All photos were taken by the author. Musei Vaticani 10187, 10186, 10185.

Sculptural busts of women in the third century continued depicting them wearing the hairstyles of imperial women. Another anonymous statue head displayed in the Vatican Museum is dated to the early decades of the fourth century and features a woman wearing a similar hairstyle to Galeria Valeria (Figure 48). This particular hairstyle is reminiscent of the empress's numismatic portrait, with the hair pulled behind the ears, braided and pinned over the crown of the head (sometimes below it), and usually topped with a diadem or headband (Figure 49). It is possible that the subject may have wanted to claim an aspect of the empress that appealed to her, in this case the hairstyle. Galeria was the only Tetrarchic woman advertised in public art. As the daughter of Diocletian and widow of Galerius, Galeria Valeria became both dangerous and desirable for the remaining Tetrarchs. As we saw in Chapter 1, Maximinus Daia sought to marry Galeria when she fled to him after her husband's death. Licinus chose instead to execute her. In both cases, Galeria carried in her body the seeds of empire which demanded that it be controlled through marriage or snuffed out in death. Considering the limited public promotion of Galeria in official media, the hairstyle perhaps indicates a familiarity with Galerius' court, but like those we examined above, also invites the viewer to mistake her for the empress.



Figure 48. Anonymous woman with the hairstyle of Galeria Valeria in Musei Vaticani. Photo taken by the author. Musei Vaticani 10181. Photo taken by the author.



Figure 49. Profile view of Galeria Valeria's hairstyle. Image credit: ANS 1967.153.28; *RIC* 6.34.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ numismatics.org/collection/1967.153.28

Material Girls

Personal upkeep and self-presentation were important values that most Romans understood from childhood.³⁰¹ Toys, dolls, and figurines introduced sex and gender ideals, and contributed to the socialization of children.³⁰² Greek terracotta figurines appear as early as the tenth century BCE and survive in great number from antiquity. Art historians have traced their development from bell-shaped appearances in the geometric period (tenth century BCE) (Figure 50) to more defined and jointed models in the classical period (fourth century BCE) (Figure 51).



Figure 50. Boeotian figurine with movable legs. Image credit: Princeton Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund 2002-250.³⁰³

³⁰¹ Leslie Shumka, "Designing Women: The Representation of Women's Toiletries on Funerary Monuments in Roman Italy," in *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, ed. Alison Mary Keith and J.C. Edmondson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2008), 174.

³⁰² Shumka, "Designing Women," 174; Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 256-260.

³⁰³ artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/40454



Figure 51. Classical-era terracotta figurine with movable joints. Metropolitan Museum of Art 44.11.8.³⁰⁴

Terracotta figurines are commonly found in tombs of children and votive deposits buried near temples dedicated to Aphrodite and Artemis, where children offered their toys on the threshold of adulthood.³⁰⁵ These figurines resemble mature women with shapely breasts and hips, and were made from a variety of natural sources such as wood, terracotta, bone, cloth, ivory, and other materials.³⁰⁶ Scholars distinguish dolls from figurines based on archaeological context.³⁰⁷ Michael Manson identified 500 dolls, but Fanny Dolansky narrowed it down to 18 dolls based on the criteria listed above: movable limbs, appropriate size, archaeological context

³⁰⁴ metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/254514

³⁰⁵ Michel Manson and Elisabetta Simeoni. "Le Bambole Romane Antiche." *La Ricerca Folklorica*, 16 (1987): 15.

³⁰⁶ Beryl Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 128. The wooden, cloth, and terracotta figurines may have been simple enough to be produced in homes of modest means, whereas ivory and other precious materials were likely commissioned; Kate Elderkin, "Jointed Dolls in Antiquity," in *AJA* 34, no. 4 (1930): 456. Elderkin believes dolls may also have been made from marble, wax, and leather.

Example of a bone doll (Metropolitan Museum of Art 11.212.43): metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/248624

³⁰⁷ Fanny Dolansky, "Playing with Gender: Girls, Dolls, and Adult Ideals in the Roman World," *Classical Antiquity* 31, no. 2 (2012): 257, n. 3.

(not cultic nor religious) from the western provinces, Italy, Egypt, and Judea.³⁰⁸ Because terracotta figurines appear in domestic and religious contexts, their interpretation can be problematic.³⁰⁹ For a figurine to be considered a doll, it needs to resemble a human form to allow the child to relate to it intimately. The model must be an appropriate size and weight for young children to manipulate, and, although not necessary, possess jointed limbs that allow for movement.³¹⁰ Because the majority of terracotta figurines were made of fragile materials, archaeologists have concluded that most were not intended to be handled by children.³¹¹

Unlike the earlier Greek terracotta figurines, dolls from this period were more refined, made with finer detail and luxury materials, and became more individualized according to its owner.³¹² The dolls in the Roman period tend to be made primarily from cloth, bone, and ivory, and depict elite adult women from the second century BCE to fourth century CE.³¹³ The dolls of this study share common features such as having jointed limbs, being found in the tombs of wealthy young women, and having the hairstyles of Roman empresses. Mortuary evidence suggests that these dolls were owned mostly by wealthy girls. Slave girls and those of lower economic status may have also interacted with these luxury dolls, but without evidence to support this idea, we will assume the possessors were wealthy and likely elite.³¹⁴ Although it is a

³⁰⁸ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 257.

³⁰⁹ Joan Reilly, "Naked and Limbless: Learning About the Feminine Body in Ancient Athens," in *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*, ed. Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow and Claire Lyons (London: Routledge, 1997), 163; Elderkin, "Jointed Dolls in Antiquity," 456.

³¹⁰ Manson, "Le Bambole," 15-16; Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 257. Maya B. Muratov, "Greek Terracotta Figurines with Articulated Limbs," accessed 5/18/2020, metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gtal/hd_gtal.htm. For Muratov, the movement of the figurines' joints produced a noise which made figurines useful as apotropaic objects in warding off evil.

³¹¹ Cloth dolls are well represented in the sample of eighteen dolls Dolansky examines. Manson, "Le Bambole," 18; Elderkin, "Jointed Dolls in Antiquity," 465.

³¹² Manson, "Le Bambole," 18.

³¹³ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 257.

³¹⁴ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 259-260.

matter of speculation precisely how these girls came to possess these particular dolls and what they meant to them, we can make some educated guesses, nonetheless.

Thomas Wiedemann posited from the dolls' body shapes, defined breasts, genitalia, and (sometimes) wide hips that these particular dolls were thought to prepare young girls for motherhood.³¹⁵ Rosalind Janssen proposed an alternative theory that these dolls were intended to prepare girls for marriage and motherhood, while Leslie Shumka suggests that the dolls were used for role-playing.³¹⁶ Dolansky examines a sample of dolls to better understand how these contributed to the socialization of children referring to modern doll-play and how girls interacted with dolls.³¹⁷ Dolansky argues that three common features prominent on dolls, the use of adornment, the doll's ability for movement, and those that are imperially inspired, are useful in determining the sort of cultural ideas (*cultus, ornatus, munditia*) girls would have interacted with at a young age.³¹⁸

I limit my scope to just three dolls because they represent the empresses I examine in this dissertation and fall in the late second and third century. The three dolls under examination in this section have unique appearances and would have been utilized differently with each owner.³¹⁹ The dolls under examination are images of grown women and resemble empresses, with an air of refinement and adornment. If these dolls were indeed designed to teach a lesson, the dolls I examine below teach little girls *cultus* and how to wield the *insignia feminarum*. Then,

³¹⁵ Thomas Wiedemann, *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* (Routledge: New Haven, 1989), 149.

³¹⁶ Rosalind Janssen, "Soft Toys from Egypt." In *Archaeological Research in Roman Egypt. Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series* 19 (1996): 239; Shumka, "Designing Women," 168-9.

³¹⁷ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 259.

³¹⁸ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 259; 269.

³¹⁹ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 257.

as now, young girls probably treated their dolls as vehicles for their imagination, as tools to prepare them for their adult lives, and as an extension of themselves.³²⁰

Dolls embodied the three *insignia feminarum* that the tribune Valerius described when seeking to repeal the *Lex Oppia: munditiae* (elegance), *ornatus* (adornment), and *cultus* (bodily care/refinement). These markers of femininity suggest that women and girls were interacting with these ideas of femininity since childhood and grew up with these ideas of self-presentation as factors in what it meant to be a woman.³²¹ Dolls inspired by imperial ladies exhibited certain features related to femininity that were likely meant to prepare young girls for their adult roles as wives and mothers. These dolls likely resonated with girls because they represented actual women and promoted feminine bodily care that they were expected to mimic in their outward appearance.³²² Through exploration and interaction with these dolls, young girls learned what was considered to be beautiful and what it took to achieve that appearance.

The dolls of this study are made of ivory, a luxury material used in producing statues and dolls probably because its paleness closely resembles the cultural ideal of human skin.³²³

Although these dolls have the hairstyles characteristic of Roman empresses and similar facial features found in official portraits, they probably were not meant to be replicas or portraits of the

³²⁰ Dolls are given an identity by their young owners. While there are moments of fantasy involved with doll play, these scenarios are rooted in reality. As Donald Ball states, “toys are part of the paraphernalia which facilitate the process by which children prepare and are prepared for the performance of various social roles.” Simon de Beauvoir speaking about dolls echoes this same sentiment, “the little girl pampers her doll and dresses her as she dreams of being dressed and pampered; inversely, she thinks of herself as a marvelous doll.” Later in this section, I discuss three Roman dolls and the types of owners these dolls likely had. For more see, Donald W. Ball, “Toward a Sociology of Toys: Inanimate Objects, Socialization, and the Demography of the Doll World,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1967): 449-450; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: First Vintage Books, 2011), 293-7.

³²¹ Dolansky, “Playing with Gender,” 269.

³²² de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 293.

³²³ When I say cultural ideal, I am referring to how women in ancient Mediterranean art are always painted white, suggesting that they spent a lot of time indoors. Ivory may have also given the doll a more human-like quality. Elaborate Greek cult statues utilized ivory for the deity’s skin. Zahra Newby, “The Grottarossa Doll and Her Mistress: Hope and Consolation in a Roman Tomb,” in *The Materiality of Mourning: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Zahra Newby and Ruth Toulson (New York: Routledge, 2019), 80; 94.

empresses.³²⁴ A closer inspection of the dolls' facial features suggests they are not modeled upon the official portraits of the empresses, and instead, *may* reflect the owner's physiognomy or may be modeled after someone else.³²⁵ Hairstyles made popular by certain empresses were not only fashionable; they were personal statements and markers of social rank. The hairstyles on dolls may have been a matter of fashionable taste that was contemporary for the period in which they were produced.

The first doll under investigation is an ivory doll found in the tomb of an eighteen-year old aristocratic girl Crepereia Tryphaena. It is dated to the mid-second century CE based on the doll's coiffure, which is stylized after Faustina the Elder (Figure 52). Archaeologists discovered a pair of tombs in 1899, one with Crepereia Tryphaena's name inscribed and a carved relief depicting a mourning scene: a veiled *matrona* seated on the bed, a man grieving nearby, and a reclining girl. The second tomb with a plain exterior belonged to L. Crepereius Euhodus, most likely Crepereia's brother. The mortuary evidence suggests that Crepereia likely came from a wealthy family, given the quality of grave goods and the fact that she and her brother were buried in a double-burial tomb near Hadrian's mausoleum. Her *cognomen* indicates she comes from a family of freedmen.

³²⁴ D'Ambra provides a full discussion on the facial features found on the doll and Faustina's portraits: Eve D'Ambra, "Beauty and the Roman Female Portrait," in *Art and Rhetoric in Roman Culture*, ed. Jaś Elsner and Michel Meye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 158-60.

³²⁵ Newby argues that dolls should be characterized as "quasi-portraits, offering a projection of what the young girl might look like in the future" when she reached marriageable age. D'Ambra avoids claiming that dolls are identical portraits to the official media of the empresses. See, Newby, "The Grottarossa Doll," 92; D'Ambra, "Beauty and the Roman Female Portrait," 162.

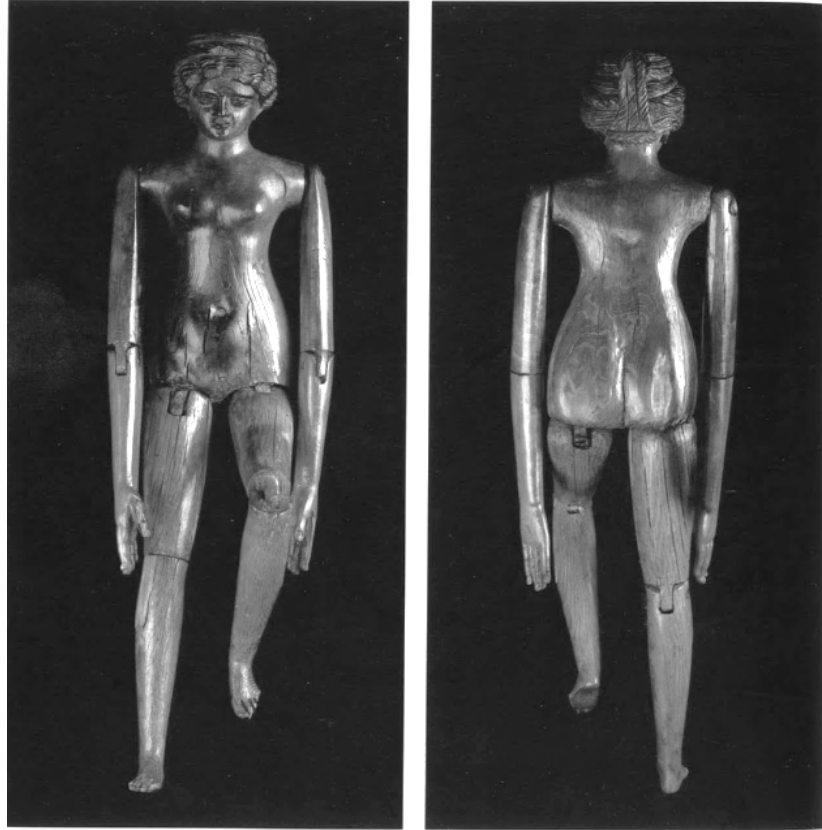


Figure 52. Crepereia Tryphaena doll. It is now located in the Museum of the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome.³²⁶

When archaeologists first opened the tomb, they noted that water had leaked into it from the Tiber. Inside, they found the skeletal remains of Crepereia wearing a crown of gold leaves upon her head, her doll, jewelry, and other small objects.³²⁷ Among her jewelry were gold and pearl earrings, an emerald necklace, a jeweled gold brooch, and four rings, of which one was inscribed with the name Filetus.³²⁸ Scholars suggest that Crepereia was likely betrothed to a man, probably the same Filetus, based on the items she was buried with, which were typical burial

³²⁶ upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b6/Creperia_Tryphaena-2.png

³²⁷ Anna Mura Sommelia, "Creperia Tryphaena," accessed April 24, 2020, cortedicassazione.it/corte-di-cassazione/it/scoperte_archeologiche.page

³²⁸ Newby, "The Grottarossa Doll," 86; D'Ambra, "Beauty and the Roman Female Portrait," 176.

goods for unwed girls.³²⁹ Like the Greeks, young Roman brides were expected to dedicate their dolls to Venus as a rite of passage before entering the new phase of their life as wives.³³⁰

A small ivory box containing fragments of clothes and accessories to dress up the doll was located nearby.³³¹ Archaeologists were struck by the position of Crepereia's head leaning towards the doll, suggesting that she and her doll shared a special bond.³³² The fact that this doll was found with Crepereia suggests that the doll was intended to accompany Crepereia in death. The doll stands 23 cm tall and has darkened due to age and water exposure. Crepereia's doll has large, round hips and buttocks, jointed limbs, small breasts, a slight indent for the navel, and finely detailed and carved facial features and hair. The doll's limbs indicate that it can be positioned (seated, standing, or posing) while also enabling mobility.

From roughly the same period, we have another ivory doll that was found in a marble sarcophagus of an eight-year old girl along the Via Cassia (in an area referred to as Grottarossa); this doll had a coiffure similar to that worn by Faustina the Younger (Figure 53).

³²⁹ Sommelia, "Crepereia Tryphaena"; D'Ambra, "Beauty and the Roman Female Portrait," 176

³³⁰ Elderkin, "Jointed Dolls in Antiquity," 456.

³³¹ The doll wears a ring that functions as a key to the box. The clothes of both the doll and Crepereia probably rotted away. D'Ambra, "Beauty and the Roman Female Portrait," 162; 176-7.

³³² Rodolfo Lanciani describes the discovery of the tomb in Rodolfo Lanciani, "Delle scoperte avvenute nei distretti del nuovo Palazzo di Giustizia," *Buletino della Commissione Archaeologica Comunale in Roma* 17 (1889): 173-80; D'Ambra, "Beauty and the Roman Female Portrait," 156.



Figure 53. Grottarossa doll. Palazzo Massimo alle Terme 168191.³³³

The tomb was sealed with thick cement that prevented it from being disturbed until its discovery in 1964. Inside the tomb was a one of the rare examples of a preserved Roman mummy.³³⁴ The mummified girl was found wearing gold earrings, a sapphire necklace, and a gold ring intaglio. She was also buried with a cosmetic container, a doll, and a small box belonging to the doll. Testing confirms that the girl died of a bilateral pleural effusion (the buildup of fluid in the area between the lungs and chest wall) that was caused either by pneumonia or tuberculosis.³³⁵ The Grottarossa doll, like Crepereia's doll, is made of ivory that

³³³

upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/62/Bambola_in_avorio%2C_da_corredo_di_mummia_di_grottarossa%2C_via_cassia_loc_la_giustiniana%2C_150-200_dc_ca..JPG

³³⁴ What marks this mummification different than the ones performed in Egypt are the internal organs left inside rather than taken out. Newby, "The Grottarossa Doll," 78.

³³⁵ Additionally, the tests demonstrated that the girl had a previous infection or malnutrition and may have suffered from diabetes. Newby, "The Grottarossa Doll," 80.

darkened with age and water exposure, was stylized after an empress, and has a maternal figure. It differs from Crepereia's doll in certain proportions, particularly the fuller hips, thighs, and face, and smaller facial features. At 16.5 cm in height, the Grottarossa doll has small breasts, but wider hips and buttocks, physical characteristics typical of women who have given birth. The doll was possibly also influenced by dynastic propaganda that emphasized the maternity of both Faustina the Elder and Younger.³³⁶ The doll's hair is styled like Faustina the Elder's portraits and she wears a diadem.³³⁷ It is possible that such dolls buried in the tombs of young girls had more to do with their unwedded status, rather than their service as favored toys or companions.³³⁸ In the case of Crepereia Tryphaena, she died just before marriage and probably did not have the opportunity to give up her doll in the sanctuary.

The final doll under examination is another ivory example uncovered in the tomb beside the only known tomb of a Vestal Virgin, located beside the Via Valeria at Tivoli.³³⁹ It is the largest of the three dolls under examination, standing 30 cm in height (Figure 54).³⁴⁰ The original excavator, G. Mancini believed that the doll found in a nearby tomb that resembled the Vestal Virgin's. Despite his observation that the skeleton featured very white teeth that were more characteristic of a young bride than an aged Vestal, he nonetheless interpreted the two tombs as

³³⁶ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 283-5.

³³⁷ According to Newby, the sarcophagus is decorated with scenes from Virgil's *Aeneid* 4.130-156, showing Dido and Aeneas embracing each other and the hunt with Iulus, Dido, and Aeneas. There have been no studies comparing the facial features of the mummy, Dido, and the doll. Instead, it is probable that Dido and the doll carry the features of the deceased girl. Newby, "The Grottarossa Doll," 81-84.

³³⁸ Rawson, *Children and Childhood*, 128; Newby, "The Grottarossa Doll," 91.

³³⁹ The inscription on the tomb (*AE* 1931, 78) identifies the occupant of the tomb as a Vestal Virgin and says she served as such for eleven times the age at which she entered the priesthood. Given that girls usually became Vestals between the age of seven and ten and that the Romans count inclusively, Cossinia was at least 66 at the time of her death. Bordenache Battaglia, *Corredi funerari di eta' imperiale e barbarica nel Museo Nazionale Romano* (Rome, 1983), 130.

³⁴⁰ The is doll is housed in the National Roman Museum; Elderkin, "Jointed Dolls in Antiquity," 472; G. H. Hallam, "A Note on the Monument and Tomb of a Vestal Virgin at Tivoli," *Journal of Roman Studies*, 20 (1930): 14-15; Battaglia, *Corredi funerari*, 130; Dolansky appears not to be aware of Mancini's confusion, "Playing with Gender," 282; Scholars have traditionally dated dolls exclusively on hairstyles that were popularized by imperial wives.

contemporaneous and (thanks to the coiffure of the doll), of the Severan period. This doll belonged to a young bride based upon the objects found with the doll.³⁴¹ Battaglia argued, however that based upon the skeleton, and the epigraphic evidence of the Vestal's tomb, that the doll came from a significantly later tomb of a much younger woman. and was the head of the occupant was the same woman named came from a later tomb that was built over an earlier tomb housing the Vestal Virgin dated no later than 50 CE.³⁴²

All excavators agree that the doll is from the Severan dynasty, if one may judge from the doll's sophisticated coiffure and slender proportions of the figure's limbs.³⁴³ The doll was found adorned with bracelets on each wrist, bangles around each ankle, a necklace, and wore *scarpae* (high heels). If the doll was wearing clothes when it was originally interred, they most likely rotted away with time. In addition, a small box that was found inside the tomb, near the woman's right hand, probably held the doll's accessories.

Unlike the Faustina dolls, the body of this doll bears no indication of having experienced pregnancy, labor, or delivery: the limbs and torso are elongated, the breasts small and pert, the hips slim and boy-like, and a delineated pubic region. If this doll was meant to be a portrait of the empress, then its appearance is a radical departure from the manner in which the imperial administration chose to advertise Julia Domna elsewhere.³⁴⁴ This Julia Domna-inspired doll

³⁴¹ One doll is in Milan at La Scala and the other in Tarragona Spain. For more see: La bambola del Teatro della Scala è citata e riprodotta in una pessima fotografia solo nell'articolo più volte citato di M.R. RINALDI, in *Epigraphica* XVIII, 1957 p.126, fig. 5; ib., p. 118, è menzionata la bambola di Tarragona (con precedente bibliografia); Vedi ad es. M.C. CALVINI *Aquileia nostra* XLVIII, 1977 c. 94.

³⁴² Bordenache Battaglia notes that the second tomb was built considerably later than Cossinia's when the street level rose and covered the first three steps of Cossinia's tomb. Battaglia argued the doll belonged to the young woman, not the Vestal Virgin, based on the trousseaux found in similar tombs. Battaglia, *Corredi funerari*, 126 & 133; See also, Newby, "The Grottarossa Doll," 88.

³⁴³ Battaglia argues that the doll's limbs "agree with the salient features of Severan art" and the hair resembles some numismatic portraits of Plautilla. Battaglia, *Corredi funerari*, 134.

³⁴⁴ Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*, 82-3.

demonstrates that all dolls did not necessarily promote or celebrate motherhood the way the Faustina dolls did.



Figure 54. Figurine styled after Julia Domna. Palazzo Massimo alle Terme 262725. Photo by Ryan Baumann.

There is nothing on the doll to suggest that whoever owned the doll was thinking about motherhood. On the one hand, the Faustina the Elder and Younger dolls, not only promoted motherhood, but they drew attention to the empresses' bodies, recalling their important dynastic role as producers of heirs and future generations of the imperial dynasty. On the other hand, it is possible that this doll, like the Faustina dolls, is merely an individualized portrait of its owner with the hairstyle of the empress.

Regardless of the messages that the person who commissioned these dolls intended to send the recipient, there is no guarantee that the recipient understood or agreed with the messages. The owners of the dolls interacted with them according to the whims of their own imagination, often using them in unintended and unconventional ways that subvert or alter their intended purpose. A modern example of this phenomenon is the arrangement and grouping of dolls found in a nine-year old girl's bedroom (Figure 55).³⁴⁵



Figure 55. Non-conventional use of dolls.

The girl who created this vignette placed the Barbie in the passenger's seat of the pink convertible, kissing an incongruous elf who sits behind the steering wheel. To the right is the Ken doll, gagged and bound with a piece of rainbow-colored ribbon and seated alone atop a pink unicorn. The owner of these dolls clearly defied the expectations of the adults who gave them to her, but also upheld some social convention. Barbie replaced her traditional love interest with an

³⁴⁵ Special thanks to Julie Langford for providing me with this hilarious picture of her niece's toys!

elf, but notably, she cedes the steering wheel to her new beau. This eccentric scene demonstrates that not all girls treated or approached dolls in the same manner. It is indeed possible that young girls played with dolls as a way to prepare themselves for marriage and motherhood, but this photo is a potent reminder that, ultimately, we have no way of knowing whether Roman girls interacted with the dolls as their parents intended, let alone whether every doll owner aspired to motherhood herself.³⁴⁶

I agree with Dolansky's contention that imperial women served as models for these dolls based on certain characteristics found on the doll.³⁴⁷ Hairstyles associated with particular empresses is recognizable because it was seen on coinage and public spaces. At a distance, public monuments and buildings bearing the portrait of the empress were not as recognizable as clothing and hair which would have been easier to detect.³⁴⁸ These dolls are adorned with imperial hairstyles, but their faces are clearly not modeled on the empresses themselves. The facial features of the dolls suggest these are individualized portraits of their owners with the fashionable hairstyle of the period. I believe these imperial-inspired dolls provided an opportunity for girls to interact with imperial power in an imaginative way that they would have never been able to do in their actual reality.³⁴⁹ Like Barbie, these Roman dolls were used by their owner in a variety of ways that we can only speculate based on archaeological context.

³⁴⁶ Roman dolls may have functioned similarly to modern Barbie dolls. Dolansky suggests that the owner of these dolls may have used them in ways the manufacturer or gift-giver may have not originally intended. See Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 278-282.

³⁴⁷ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 282-286.

³⁴⁸ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 283.

³⁴⁹ Dolansky, "Playing with Gender," 285-286.

Living in a Material World

In this section, I examine the less-studied responses to imperial propaganda including cameos, seals, and jewelry. Not surprisingly, Julia Domna is the most frequently represented in material objects, followed by Otacilia Severa, while only a handful of these objects remain of Galeria Valeria. As unofficial responses to dynastic propaganda, these personal objects shed light on Roman men and women's perception of the empress and imperial *domus*. In this section, I investigate the possessors of these objects, the materials from which the objects are made, their function, and purpose. I consider what the possession of such items can communicate about the owner.

Images of Julia Domna and Otacilia Severa appear in glass and gemstone intaglios. Glass pastes are made primarily from molds of clay.³⁵⁰ Gemstones, on the other hand, are more valuable than glass pastes due to the craftsmanship involved with engraving the images, text, or both onto the stone. Glass intaglios were affordable imitations of precious gems for non-elites that could be mass-produced with cheaper materials (Plin. *NH.* 35.48; 37.29).³⁵¹ Glass intaglios are so convincingly identical to the gemstones that the only way to identify an imitation is by touch (Plin. *NH.* 37.197-8). Both glass and stone intaglios were typically used as stamps, signet rings, and seals, objects commonly owned by elites for their everyday transactions and correspondence. When worn in jewelry and sartorial accessories, intaglios acted as markers of personal identity demonstrating how the owner wished to be perceived in social circles.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ Liv Yarrow, "Markers of Identity for Non-Elite Romans: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Glass Paste Intaglios," in *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology* 5 (2018): 41. Yarrow argues that glass intaglios are no different than coinage.

³⁵¹ Yarrow, "Markers of Identity for Non-Elite Romans," 36.

³⁵² Yarrow, "Markers of Identity for Non-Elite Romans," 35.

The first intaglio under examination is made of glass and depicts the imperial couple. In it, Julia Domna is on the left with Septimius Severus on the right. Both subjects are in profile view facing each other directly (Figure 56). The second, a carnelian stone that would have been affixed to a ring, illustrates the entire imperial family. Caracalla and Geta are depicted on the left side facing right towards their father and mother, Severus and Domna (Figure 57). Glass pastes were produced from molds made from coins which means that they present figures and texts in reverse, flipping the composition of the numismatic portrait. This would explain the unusual position of the emperor on the right, rather than the left side of the field. The most important individual is typically on the left side of the field on coinage.



Figure 56 (left) is from the British Museum 1923,0401.818. The size of this paste is 1.6 cm in length and 1.2 cm in height. Figure 57 (right) from the Metropolitan Museum of Art 40.143. This stone is 2 cm in width.³⁵³

In a complete reversal on the white paste in Figure 56, Septimius Severus is positioned on the right facing Julia Domna, who is positioned on the left. Similarly, in Figure 57, the imperial couple are positioned on the right facing the future heirs on the left. This carnelian stone was produced around the time Caracalla was promoted to Augustus in 198, as indicated by Caracalla wearing a garland unlike Geta. Septimius Severus and Julia Domna are located on the right side

³⁵³ Figure 13: britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1923-0401-818; Figure 14: metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/253616

of the image, both in profile view with the emperor in front. On the left side of the carnelian stone, Caracalla is front left with Geta positioned behind, facing his mother, making the two Augusti the focal point of this stone.

Two gemstone intaglios bear the empress's portrait. The first (2.4 cm in height) is carved on beryl (Figure 58), and a second created in similar manner (slightly smaller at 1.9 cm) is carved on an aquamarine stone (Figure 59). The edges of the stone are smoothed down by craftsmen in order to enhance the reflection of the stone's facets (Plin. *Nat.* 37.20).³⁵⁴ The examples I have provided are not the best examples of gemstone intaglios because the facets are not cut sharply. The beryl and aquamarine stones featuring the empress have unknown provenances but would have probably been utilized on necklaces that associated the female wearer with the empress.



Figures 58 (left) Metropolitan Museum of Art 25.78.90. Figure 59 (right) Walters Art Museum 42.1218.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁴ Beryl stones must be cut in this way in order to illuminate its reflectivity. Pliny states that most beryl stones were cut down to a hexagonal shape, but the ones under discussion here appear more rounded. Perhaps shape did not matter as much as smoothing down its edges and binding it into a piece of jewelry.

³⁵⁵ Figure 15: metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/251870; Figure 16: art.thewalters.org/detail/27396/intaglio-of-julia-domna



Figure 60. Cameo of Julia Domna as Dea Syria. British Museum 1956,0517.1.³⁵⁶

The last Julia Domna object under discussion is a cameo cut on sardonyx that features the empress as the goddess Luna or Dea Syria guiding a chariot pulled by two bulls (Figure 60).³⁵⁷ Of all the intaglios, cameos are the most expensive and valuable personal ornaments because of their material (sardonyx is imported from India) and production technique (Plin. *Nat.* 37.88). Sardonyx is the preferred stone of engraved cameos because it allows the figures and decorative motifs in lighter colors to stand out against the darkness of the stone.³⁵⁸ Unlike glass pastes and gemstones, cameo production is much slower because the relief is cut through a laborious time-consuming process.³⁵⁹ Because of their attributed value and detailed craftsmanship, cameos

³⁵⁶ Figure 17: britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1956-0517-1

³⁵⁷ The exact provenance of this cameo is unknown, but based on iconography, it seems likely that this cameo was produced and found in the east.

³⁵⁸ J. Henry Middleton, *Ancient Gems: The Engraved Gems of Classical Times* (Chicago: Argonaut, Inc. Publishers, 1969), 137.

³⁵⁹ Marest-Caffey, "What's in a Face?," 62-4.

would have been worn as sartorial accessories made to be seen rather than used for seals.³⁶⁰ This particular cameo of Julia Domna is considerably ostentatious than the aforementioned glass pastes and stone intaglios. At such a large size, 13.97 cm x 10.16 cm, this cameo was owned by a wealthier person of elite status and probably worn as a brooch in support of the empress.

One of the more exceptional items under examination is a bronze seal featuring Otacilia Severa and the imperial family: Philip the Arab on the left looking at Philip II on the right, with Otacilia on his side. Next to Philip I is Zeus Serapis enthroned holding a scepter, an indication of his power (Figure 61). The inscription *MVCTΩN ΠΡΟ ΠΟΛΕΩΣ ΒΡΕΙΣΕΩΝ* (“Myston on behalf of the city of the Breises”) could be a reference to a priest of Dionysus at Smyrna.³⁶¹ It seems likely that the owners of this seal featuring the emperor might have been veterans or loyal supporters of Philip and his dynasty. Veterans who served under Septimius Severus, Caracalla, or Philip I likely used this seal to make a legible impression in show of political allegiance to their commanders.³⁶²



Figure 61. The seal is 5 cm in length and 3.8 in width. British Museum 1866,0804.2.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ Yarrow, “Makers of Identity for Non-Elite Romans,” 36; Laure Marest-Caffey, “What’s in a Face? Rethinking the Greek Portrait through Hellenistic Glyptic” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2017), 64.

³⁶¹ *Myston pro Poleos Briseon*. My committee members Bill Murray and Alex Imrie assisted in translating the seal’s inscription. Murray offers an alternative translation, “Of/belonging to the initiates on behalf of the city of the Breises.” Imrie suggests the actual text is: *μυστῶν πρὸ πόλεως (Dionysios) βρεισεῶν*. He argues that the use of *mystes* makes it clear that the seal belongs to an initiate of the mystic cult of Dionysus Breiseus in Smyrna. The use of *mystes* in connection with Dionysus is found in Paus. 8.54.5.

³⁶² Yarrow, “Makers of Identity for Non-Elite Romans,” 38; 41.

³⁶³ britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1866-0804-2

One of the more remarkable objects celebrating an empress is a bone hairpin comprised of a scallop shell with the bust of a woman at the top (Figure 62). The material, quality, and fineness of hairpins vary depending on the owner's status. Expensive hairpins were made out of bone, glass, and gold and silver, and decorated with precious stones, while wood was an affordable option for lower class women.³⁶⁴ As an accessory made to be seen, hair bodkins were topped with a variety of motifs including statuettes, busts, hands, animals, and mythological deities. Hairpins served as embellishments to women's hair in helping maintain popular hairstyles and as symbols of good luck.³⁶⁵ Alternatively, hair bodkins could also be utilized as head scratchers and as pins to anchor a matron's veil.³⁶⁶



Figure 62. Hairpin of a woman resembling Julia Domna. Walters Art Museum 71.625.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Johns, Catherine. "Isis, not Cybele: A Bone Hairpin from London" in *Interpreting Roman London: Papers in Memory of Hugh Chapman*, ed. J. Bird, M. Hassall, H. Sheldon (Oxford: Oxbow Monograph, 1996), 115; Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 75; Hall and Wardle provide an excellent analysis regarding hairpins found in Roman Britain, comparing fine hairpins and those produced with less quality. For more, see Jenny Hall and Angela Wardle, "Decorative Bone Hairpins from Roman London" in *Image, Craft and the Classical World. Essays in honour of Donald Bailey and Catherine Johns*, ed. N. Crummy (Montagnac, FR: Monogr. Instrumentum 29, 2005), 174-5.

³⁶⁵ Johns, "Isis, not Cybele," 115.

³⁶⁶ Janet Stephens, "Ancient Roman Hairdressing: On (Hair)pins and Needles," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 21, no. 1 (2008): 127.

³⁶⁷ art.thewalters.org/detail/26020/bust-of-a-woman-4/

The current hairpin under investigation contains a miniature bust which is 4.4 cm in height and breaks off just below the shell where a long pin would have been.³⁶⁸ Based on the material and craftsmanship, particularly the carving and fineness of the face and coiffure, this pin probably belonged to an elite woman. The statuette's hairstyle is identical to Julia Domna's sophisticated coiffure, thus dating the hairpin to the second century. Scholars cannot confirm if this hairpin is supposed to be the empress, or if it was the owner herself with the empress's hairstyle.

Subjects likely wore these ornaments as sartorial accessories in an expression of their loyalty to the emperor. After Severus won the civil war over succession, artists produced a variety of objects from intaglios with images of the emperor, his wife, and his sons as the future heirs, to finer items like the cameo, bronze seal, and hairpin. The fact that the gemstones and glass pastes could come in a variety of sizes and materials for different settings suggests that men and women alike adorned themselves with these images in support of Septimius Severus and his dynasty.³⁶⁹ The intaglios featuring Julia Domna would have been utilized for similar purposes, only this time worn by women of elite status, especially those made of beryl and aquamarine which are among the more costly and finest stones.³⁷⁰ The stones were likely worn as jewelry in support of particular dynasties. The owner of this hairpin likely wanted to present herself as someone with elegant, sophisticated style, and associations with the empress.

³⁶⁸ According to Olson, intricate and detailed the pins required a long pin, while simpler styles were on shorter pins. For more, see Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman*, 75.

³⁶⁹ Yarrow, "Makers of Identity for Non-Elite Romans," 41.

³⁷⁰ Middleton, *Ancient Gems*, 136.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have investigated the responses of women to imperial propaganda. In some cases, women demonstrably looked to the empress as an example for how to navigate public life. The public persona of the empress represented a sort of norm for this. The empress, as subjects viewed her, was a constructed figure that the imperial administration used in official propaganda to disseminate esteemed qualities and virtues of femininity and possibly empire. How the empress was perceived in official media by imperial subjects did not necessarily correlate to her real identity. She may have represented a moral exemplar for women, someone who embodied motherhood, familial harmony and piety as the empresses were advertised in coinage and state art. Imperial wives were promoted as exempla of feminine virtue and beauty that women may have aspired to. Although evidence for this level of impact is difficult to demonstrate conclusively, I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter that clear evidence exists for women mimicking empresses in their sartorial and coiffure choices. Such imitation may have been designed to associate the wearer with the empress aesthetically, but it may also have been a political statement expressing support for the dynasty.

I have also paid particular attention to the image of the empress on personal objects, specifically dolls, jewelry, and seals. It seems unlikely that these stylistic choices were expected to catch the eye of the emperor, but instead lent an air of authority to the wearer, suggesting that she enjoyed a degree of courtly sophistication, and perhaps aligned her personal identity with the imperial house. Dolls modeled after the two Faustinae suggest that these were intended to prepare young girls for their future roles as mothers. Not all dolls, however, were created for similar purposes, as the doll modeled after Julia Domna suggests. Roman dolls with the

hairstyles of imperial women were individualistic and were utilized differently according to their owner. Women's responses to imperial messaging based on imperial wives can be seen in the adoption of hairstyles and the possession of decorative personalized objects. While most elite women might opt for acts of civic munificence, these more personalized responses to imperial propaganda reveal there were other less costly means of keeping up with the upper echelon of society.

CONCLUSION

Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa, and Galeria Valeria occupy important moments in the evolution of third century dynastic succession ideologies. In the course of 120 years between the reigns of Septimius Severus and Galerius, these women served a critical role in the negotiation and consensus of dynastic policy between emperors and their subject populations. Emperors employed images of their wives to appeal to specific populations, seeking support for their own legitimacy as emperors, but also their dynastic ambitions. The familial metaphors found in dynastic propaganda invited the public to have a closer relationship with their emperor, his wife, and their heirs. Family metaphors in imperial dynastic propaganda were meant to give imperial subjects a sense of belonging and consensus to ideology. As the embodiment of empire, imperial women served as metaphors of empire, and their likeness in state art promoted the dynastic ambitions of the emperor. There were three major succession ideologies in the late second and third century: dynastic, imperial adoption, and succession through battlefield victories.

In the first succession ideology, an aspiring emperor's claim to the purple rested primarily on his lineage. Imperial mothers and daughters were useful in legitimating emperors with their predecessor, by calling attention to their connection. An emperor was only as legitimate as his mother (or wife) was chaste and pious. Emperors with dynastic ambitions confronted a competing model of succession which the Senate had been promoting ever since Nerva adopted Trajan in 96 CE (Plin. *Pan.* 7; Tac. *Hist.* 1.13-16). The second succession ideology, encouraged by the Senate, promoted adoptive succession in which emperors were the

best men selected by the Senate. So long as emperors had no biological sons, the adoption model worked well, though emperors continued to adopt close relatives as successors, occasionally advertising their women in order to make clear the family connection between themselves and their successors. Faustina the Younger was particularly useful in legitimating Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. As the daughter of Antoninus Pius, Faustina was the connection that allowed Marcus to move away from adoptive into inherited succession when it came to Commodus succeeding him as heir apparent. He employed the images of the empresses and family metaphor to counter the adopted succession ideology some senators advocated. Coins featured vignettes of the imperial family that were previously private, thus inviting subjects to envision themselves as intimates of the emperor and his family. Faustina's reverse types encouraged subjects to become emotionally invested in the emperor's family. Additionally, she was awarded the Mater Castrorum honorific which served to facilitate the uncontested succession of Commodus and ensure that there would be a peaceful succession after Marcus Aurelius.

Septimius Severus adopted the same strategies for his own wife some twenty years later. By the time that he had defeated his rivals and established himself on the throne securely, subjects began to respond warmly to Julia Domna's role in dynastic propaganda. I detected three phases in Julia Domna's celebration on coinage. The first phase occurred between Severus' seizure of Rome and the defeat of his two rivals, Pescinnius Niger and Clodius Albinus between 193 and 195 CE. During this period, the empress' coinage closely followed Faustina's types and legends and the emperor publicized dreams and omens in which Julia Domna served to bind him to Marcus Aurelius and his family. In essence, Julia Domna's image was used to legitimate Severus' position in this period. The second period was marked by Severus awarding Julia Domna the Mater Castrorum title and employing it in order to combat the adopted succession

ideology so as to legitimate his sons as successors. As part of this phase, Julia Domna received unprecedented titles such as Mater Augustorum, and was associated and even assimilated to maternal deities like Cybele. After Severus' death, the Senate awarded Julia Domna with the title Mater Senatus, Mater Patriae, apparently placing themselves under the care of the empress whose piety and care were offered as a guarantee of harmony between her fractious sons. This is the “maternal megalomania” stage of Julia Domna’s coinage. The third phase of Julia Domna’s coinage occurs between 212 and 217 CE, after Caracalla murdered his brother and the dynastic propaganda that emphasized family harmony had to be renegotiated. The titles and images of Julia Domna were ubiquitous and responses to her represent a surprisingly broad swath of Roman society, including women and girls. She was celebrated on over 500 inscriptions spanning across the empire.

The “maternal megalomania” that characterized Julia Domna’s coinage was not extended to Otacilia Severa and Galeria Valeria. In the aftermath of the murder of Severus Alexander and Julia Mamaea at the hands of their own troops, Otacilia Severa’s reverse types steered clear of the Mater Castrorum title as well as all other metaphorical motherhoods awarded to earlier empresses. Instead, Otacilia’s advertisement mainly focused on her wifely and motherly virtues that guaranteed the legitimacy of Philip II as successor. It could also be evidence of a time lag in communications from the imperial administration and lack of coherent policy that was disseminated rigorously from the imperial center. Subjects continued to employ the metaphorical motherhood titles to Otacilia in dedications, suggesting that they sought the guarantee of a smooth dynastic succession that the titles seemed to offer. Subjects celebrated the empresses with metaphorical motherhood titles after the imperial house no longer did so. Otacilia Severa finds mention on 86 inscriptions and is well represented on milestones and statue bases.

The “maternal megalomania” that characterized Julia Domna’s coinage was not extended to Otacilia Severa and Galeria Valeria. In the aftermath of the murder of Severus Alexander and Julia Mamaea at the hands of their own troops, Otacilia Severa’s reverse types steered clear of the Mater Castrorum title as well as all other metaphorical motherhoods awarded to earlier empresses. Instead, Otacilia’s advertisement mainly focused on her wifely and motherly virtues that guaranteed the legitimacy of Philip II as successor. Still, however, subjects continued to employ the metaphorical motherhood titles to Otacilia in dedicatory and honorific inscriptions, suggesting that they sought the guarantee of a smooth dynastic succession that the titles seemed to offer. Minted beside the types for Galerius and the other Tetrarchs, Galeria’s appearance gives the impression of an uncomplicated dynastic succession. Evidence that the dynastic succession ideology was still potent amongst subjects are the four inscriptions that mention Galeria Valeria, each endowing her with the unofficial title, Mater Castrorum. Maximinius Daia, Licinius, and Galeria all seem to be aware of the potency of the empress’ image to legitimate successors; it was for that reason Daia offered marriage, which she unwisely rejected, and it was why Licinius executed her after she was unwilling “to yield to Licinius what she had denied to Daia, the whole inheritance of her husband” (Lactant. *De mort. per.* 51).

The three emperors under examination used different tactics, but ultimately, each employed his wife’s images to legitimate themselves and smooth dynastic succession. Subjects’ manifest preference for dynastic succession can be demonstrated by their continued use of the metaphorical motherhood titles, especially the Mater Castrorum. Despite the changing political realities of obtaining the purple over the course of the third century, dynastic succession ideology trumped both the adopted succession ideology promoted by senators like Pliny and Tacitus, as well as the fictional brotherhood of the Tetrarchy. Daia’s attempt to marry Galeria Valeria, and

Licinius' decision to execute her are the most eloquent testimonies to the ideological power behind dynastic succession ideologies. Though no other imperial woman would again be called *Mater Castrorum* after Galeria Valeria, Constantine would reinstate dynastic propaganda in order to legitimate both himself and his sons.

In this dissertation, I have reconstructed the communications about Julia Domna, Otacilia Severa and Galeria Valeria between the emperors and their subjects by examining official media and responses in the form of dedications. By conducting a survey of reverse types, I was able to determine the frequency of which virtues and messages the imperial administration was intent on pushing in imperial coinage. A close examination of the inscriptions demonstrates that dedicants range from civic entities to private individuals to members of the military, and that they all actively participated in ideological negotiations regarding dynastic succession while expressing their consensus for the emperor's reign. Family metaphors and metaphorical motherhood titles were widely disseminated on official media to promote the dynastic ambitions of each emperor. The family metaphors provided imperial subjects a sense of belonging to the emperor, his family, and ultimately, the greater empire. As everyday mobile objects, coins were accessible and handled by most people in daily transactions and survive in large quantity. Images of the empress and her offspring were constructed to offer subjects a more intimate glance inside the emperor's *domus* and invited subjects to imagine a personal connection with the family that fostered loyalty to the dynasty. Coinage touted the esteemed virtues associated with imperial mothers like their fertility, chastity, and piety to the state and family. The presence of imperial women and children in official media promised peace and prosperity beyond the emperor's reign and guaranteed a peaceful transition of power.

Chapter One focused on the way in which empresses appeared in official media, primarily coinage, to legitimate their husbands and sons as emperors from the late second to the beginning of the fourth century. As a usurper, Septimius Severus tailored propaganda that promoted his family in order to legitimate his dynastic ambitions by focusing on his self-adoption into the Antonine house. These connections to Marcus Aurelius and his family were widely promoted on official media, inscriptions, and literary sources. Julia Domna shares many of Faustina's reverse types and Mater Castrorum title in order to draw their shared connections and ultimately to legitimate Severus' self-adoption and dynasty. Julia Domna's image and her titlature helped enhance the legitimacy of Caracalla and Geta as the future successors. Julia Domna was the first empress endowed with the honorifics of Mater Senatus, Mater Patriae, Pia, and Felix. The Senate awarded these titles to the empress in hopes that she could settle the animosity between Caracalla and Geta after the death of Septimius Severus.

The *Matres Castrorum Coinage* database allowed me to determine the reverse types that were issued in large quantities for each emperor. In the third century, reverse types for empresses veer away from metaphorical motherhood titles and instead advertised the actual relationships they enjoyed with their wives and sons. Philip the Arab promoted his wife's actual maternity to legitimate Philip II as the future emperor. Otacilia Severa's coinage avoided any references to state institutions and mainly concentrated on actual motherhood and Philip's extravagant celebration of the Ludi Saeculares and Rome's 1000-year anniversary. Tetrachic mints only issued one reverse type for Galeria Valeria very briefly from 308 to 311. Galerius minted coins celebrating Galeria and her Augusta title, in order to legitimate himself as the new Augusti of the East. His Caesares, Licinius and Maximinius Daia followed suit, employing precisely the same type and legends as Galerius had used. Doing so marked their loyalty and fealty to Galerius.

After Galerius' death, both Licinius and Maximinius Daia recognized the potency of Galeria's title and its power to legitimize her husband. Maximinius Daia offered to divorce his wife to marry the recently widowed Galeria, but when she refused, he drove her and her mother into exile. In order to prevent anyone else from exploiting the legitimacy she might endow to a future husband, Licinius hunted her down and executed her and her mother Prisca. So much for the power of her Augusta and metaphorical motherhood titles.

In Chapter Two, I looked to inscriptions erected by subject populations as responses to imperial propaganda. The emperor and his subjects engaged in dialogues and conversations that lent themselves into the creation of ideology and consensus with the emperor. Although soldier emperors no longer officially awarded their wives the metaphorical motherhood titles or the variety of reverse types assigned to Julia Domna, subjects continued celebrating the empresses with metaphorical motherhood titles on epigraphic evidence to express their consensus for the emperor's dynasty. By appealing to the empress as Mater Castrorum, subjects believed that the empress shared a meaningful relationship with the military. Despite the meaning of the title, it was not directed towards the military initially, but rather toward cities and other civic groups. The celebration of the Mater Senatus, Patriae, Pia, and Felix titles in dedications indicate that subjects believed in the power of these titles and what they meant, from the reign of Septimius Severus through Galerius in the Tetrarchy.

Subjects responded to imperial propaganda and celebrated the emperor and his family enthusiastically on inscriptions and monuments with the intention of developing a meaningful relationship with the emperor. Subjects engaged with the emperor by echoing or amplifying the imperial family's titulature and portraits. Although emperors had long since avoided the metaphorical motherhood titles for their wives, subjects continued celebrating them as such in

dedicatory and honorific inscriptions as well as semi-official documents such as milestones. In the case of Julia Domna, cities, civic officials, and military units were among the most enthusiastic populations that responded to imperial propaganda in the early years of Septimius Severus' reign. Erecting inscriptions in honor of the emperor and his family, and sometimes of the empresses alone, signaled their commitment and loyalty to the emperor and his dynasty. Supplementing the empresses' titles with metaphorical motherhoods such as the *Mater Castrorum* allowed subjects to express their preference for an uncontested dynastic succession.

Amidst the political chaos of barbarian invasions and frequent challenges to emperors, subjects continued celebrating empresses albeit at a significantly lower rate over the course of the century. Through the use of data and visualization software, patterns within the evidence begin to emerge. Curiously, milestone inscriptions tend to be a frequent medium for the period and usually commemorate the emperor and his family. The number of dedications dwindle to their lowest in the Tetrarchy. Galeria Valeria is celebrated on four inscriptions in the Eastern half of the empire, Galerius' territory. Still, all four inscriptions honor the empress as *Mater Castrorum*, demonstrating that subjects still maintained belief in the imagined relationship between the empress and the military and that the title promised an uncontested dynastic succession. Addressing the empresses by their titulature, subjects hoped to appeal to the emperor for favors and support in times of crises. The fact that the *Mater Castrorum* title died with Galeria Valeria when she was executed by Licinius, underscores her value in bestowing a degree of legitimacy on another husband. Licinius apparently perceived this as enough of a threat to execute Galeria, a woman placed under his protection by the previous emperor when he died.

The third and final chapter examines the material culture of women and girls, particularly the extent to which empresses were seen as models or exempla for female subjects. This chapter

is a radical methodological departure from the first two chapters. The nature of the personal items instead invites a more heuristic methodology. I considered who the likely possessors of these objects were, wondered whether these objects were gifts or commissioned by the owners, and suggested some ideas about what these objects could tell us about their owners. Hairstyles and wigs styled after empresses, figurines bearing their likenesses, personal adornment, and public munificence were ways in which women and girls responded to imperial dynastic propaganda. Whether these items were meant to convey consensus for dynastic succession or were simply an expression of the possessor's taste, whether they enhanced the possessor's prestige or gained her husband political capital, or any combination of these possibilities must ultimately remain a matter of speculation. How empresses were perceived by other women did not necessarily align with the empresses' actual identity, since the public images of imperial figures were carefully constructed by the imperial administration for its own purposes, not to celebrate the women *per se*. Propaganda concerning the empresses may have inspired women and young girls to become dutiful mothers and wives such as they saw depicted on imperial coinage, but it is quite possible that these items were merely aesthetic choices women made in enhancing their own personal beauty or social status.

Responses to imperial propaganda reveal how diverse audiences across the empire adopted imperial titulature in dedications erected to the emperor, the entire *domus*, and, occasionally, the empress alone. Coinage laden with particular messages were crafted and disseminated for particular populations in order for the emperor to gain support for himself and his dynasty. The responses to imperial propaganda factor into the consensus of succession ideology between the imperial administrations of each emperor and his subjects, especially through metaphorical motherhood titles that subjects continued to use in their responses. The

personal objects examined in the third chapter demonstrate that women and girls certainly mimicked the personal stylings of the empresses and owned objects with their likeness as an exemplum of feminine aesthetics, or, perhaps, consensus for the ruling dynasty.

Embodying the Empire considers how the imperial households of each emperor utilized women and familial metaphors in their official propaganda by appealing directly to subject populations to garner support for their dynasty. Much scholarship has been produced on determining and quantifying imperial ideology on coinage and official inscriptions, but very seldom do other studies consider the responses of these targeted audiences. In this dissertation, I treat inscriptions dedicated by subject populations as responses to imperial propaganda. These responses demonstrate the true negotiation taking place between the emperor and specific audiences. Some subjects mimic the aesthetics and honorifics while others deviate from the official titlature and offer redefined messages in turn in the form of unique celebrations for their own purposes. Visualizing inscriptions and their location on a map allow scholars and students of Roman history to see how far-reaching imperial propaganda spread and where the emperor's support lay in the late second and third centuries.³⁷¹ The databases used in this dissertation are rich in information that provide opportunities to explore new questions of propaganda and responses in the third century. The data collected on imperial coinage and inscriptions are available free for download for others to use in their own research.

Indeed, there are many questions beyond the scope of this dissertation that I hope to examine in future publications. When it comes to coinage, quantitative analyses comparing the actual number of reverse types of Septimius Severus' coins and those of Julia Domna may reveal

³⁷¹ For more information on how the data was collected and used, please refer to page 23 of the Introduction chapter as well as page 5 of Chapter 2. For an example of how we can visualize and interact with inscription data, please refer to the link provided: public.tableau.com/profile/christina.hotalen#!/

the extent to which the empress's coins promoted familial metaphors compared to the emperor and other members of the imperial household. Coin hoard analyses for third century empresses can shed light on who these coins were being distributed to with more precision. Digital humanities tools can greatly impact projects in ancient history and open new and exciting possibilities that can further our knowledge of antiquity. The inscriptions database is a treasure-trove of information that has the most potential for exciting results. There is much work to be done on the inscriptions marred with *damnationes memoriae* and on how stones were reused throughout the third century.

Ultimately, the intersection of digital humanities and Roman history in this dissertation gives new voice to the receivers of imperial propaganda in innovative ways that have not been undertaken by other scholars. It is clear that these conversations, between the emperor and subjects, are rather male dominated, but I have shown that there is ample room in this area to identify female expression. It would be beneficial to see this develop across the imperial period and beyond when it comes to studying women and incorporate digital tools more widely in the study of these topics. My hope is that this dissertation serves as an example of how data-driven research can lead to new and exciting questions regarding the dissemination of imperial propaganda, the role and perception of imperial mothers and wives, and, most uniquely, how women and girls viewed imperial ladies in their private lives.

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APPENDIX A: ONLINE RESOURCES

Severan Database Github (**published in 2020**): github.com/usf-portal/severan-database-project

Original Severan Database Project: web3.cas.usf.edu/main/other/severan/

Severan Database Project (**restored**): hennarot.forest.usf.edu/main/other/severan/

Embodying the Empire: embodyingempire.wordpress.com/

Tableau Visualizations: public.tableau.com/profile/christina.hotalen#!/

MANTIS: numismatics.org/search/department/Roman

Online Coins of the Roman Empire: numismatics.org/ocre/

Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss Slaby (EDCS): db.edcs.eu/epigr/epi.php?s_sprache=en

Packard Humanities Institute (PHI): inscriptions.packhum.org/allregions

Europeana Eagle Project (Eagle): eagle-network.eu/resources/search-inscriptions/

Epigraphic Database Heidelberg (EDH): edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/home