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# Octavia Minor and the Transition from Republic to Empire

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OCTAVIA MINOR  
AND THE TRANSITION FROM REPUBLIC TO EMPIRE

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
History

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by  
Katrina Moore  
August 2017

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Accepted by:  
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## ABSTRACT

As a “good girl,” Octavia Minor, older sister to Octavian née Augustus, has been understudied as a historical figure of the Late Roman Republic. Her portrayal as a “good” *exempla* in the written classical sources obscures Octavia’s agency. This thesis seeks to divest Octavia of her “good girl” reputation, as has been done by other scholars for many “bad girls” of antiquity, such as Cleopatra and Livia. Removing this “good” stereotype will allow for an examination of Octavia’s role in transforming the moral example of a Roman woman from the Republic to the Empire.

Through attentive handling of androcentric classical sources, this study will carefully seek to rehabilitate Octavia as an astute, rather than “good” woman. Though large portions of Octavia’s life are not examined by the classical sources, this thesis will turn to the people with whom Octavia was connected, her mother, step-father, husbands, and brother, as well as her female contemporaries with whom she was compared, Fulvia and Cleopatra, in an effort to more fully examine the entirety of Octavia’s life.

The material culture associated with Octavia will also be studied. An examination of the innovative coins which displayed Octavia’s portrait, the busts and cameos, and the portico which she built in Rome all contribute to understanding Octavia as a woman who was not merely “good,” but was instead well-versed in her understanding of Roman traditional values and influential in transforming what it meant to be a Roman *matrona* under the new, innovative Roman state her brother was constructing. Octavia’s *exempla* would serve as the prototype to emulate for Livia and others, including Octavia’s own female descendants, as Roman empress.

**DEDICATION**

*In Memoriam*

To my mother

Daphne Diane Stemple

(1957-2016)

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## INTRODUCTION

It is a strange quirk of women's historians that we have a drive to rescue "bad girls" from the darkness of their reputations. The negative bias of male classical writers is well attested to, and the lives of women, such as Cleopatra and Livia, have been re-assessed and re-evaluated with this ancient androcentric mentality in mind. Perhaps that is why Octavia Minor has been understudied – she would never be put into the category of women who were mistreated by these classical historians. In this thesis, I will attempt to rescue Octavia from her "good girl" reputation and give her the same careful consideration as her "bad girl" counterparts.

The worst, the very worst, slander leveled against Octavia in antiquity was that she grieved too deeply at the death of her only son Marcellus (Sen. *Ad Marc.* 2.1-4). To ancient authors, and often modern authors as well, she was the "good" wife, mother, and sister. She skillfully navigated the public realm without drawing the ire of her male counterparts. She was never accused of adultery, the usual accusation cast upon women who made unfeminine, aggressive political moves. She was not said to have poisoned any of her rivals, nor did she aspire to public glory or notoriety. The classical sources give the impression that Octavia's inherent "goodness" was the quality that undergirded her entire life.

This assumption, that Octavia was defined by her "goodness," is as deceptive as the assumption that any woman was defined by her inglorious reputation. The bias toward Octavia is more subtle and difficult to see, because she is not vilified or mistreated, but this positive bias limits her just as much as a negative bias limits her "bad

girl” counterparts. Both the “bad” and “good” woman are stereotypes in ancient literature and both require careful examination.

While Octavia has certainly been understudied, she has not been completely ignored by historians.<sup>1</sup> The only full study of Octavia’s life is an unpublished doctoral dissertation written in 1944 by Mary Singer.<sup>2</sup> While Singer’s work is to be admired for its studious gathering of primary sources and timeline organization, due to the era in which it was written, the dissertation frequently discounts Octavia’s agency. Singer was writing thirty years before the history of ancient women began to be re-examined. Sarah Pomeroy’s breakthrough study *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* opened the door for historians to look at the ancient written record in tandem with women’s material culture.<sup>3</sup> A little over a decade before J.P.V.D. Balsdon’s book *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* had attempted something similar, but he did not have the advantage of the thriving feminist movement which drove Pomeroy to seek to reclaim the female half of ancient history.<sup>4</sup>

The 1980s and early 90s saw a surge in both ancient women’s history and the burgeoning field of family history. Suzanne Dixon’s landmark monographs *The Roman Mother* and *The Roman Family* explored Roman social connections by focusing on groups of people which had been understudied due to the dearth of information about

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<sup>1</sup> Hammond 1937 for primary source citations.

<sup>2</sup> Singer 1944, titled “Octavia Minor, Sister of Augustus: An Historical and Biographical Study” from Duke University.

<sup>3</sup> Pomeroy 1975.

<sup>4</sup> Balsdon 1962.



them in the written record of historians.<sup>5</sup> Susan Treggiari's *Roman Marriage* studied the change over time which the institution of marriage underwent throughout Roman history exposing that it was not a stagnate concept.<sup>6</sup> The contribution of Keith Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family*, sought to open conversations into the varying legal and social facets of the family.<sup>7</sup> Richard Bauman's *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome* began to merge the new studies in social history with the more traditional studies of Roman politics, exposing how Roman women were far from passive.<sup>8</sup> The late 1990s saw art historians also engage with the discussion of ancient women, such as the groundbreaking *I, Claudia* edited by Diana Kleiner and Susan Matheson.<sup>9</sup> The chapters within looked at women's patronage, material culture, as well as gendered spaces in the home. Elizabeth Bartman's monograph *Portraits of Livia*, cataloged the different types of imagery associated with the first Empress of Rome.<sup>10</sup> Susan Wood's seminal study, *Imperial Women*, is unsurpassed in breadth and wealth of collected and analyzed material culture of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.<sup>11</sup>

With this solid academic base to draw from, the last fifteen years of the study of Roman women have pulled out specific individuals for study. Anthony Barrett's *Livia*,

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<sup>5</sup> Dixon 1998; Dixon 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Treggiari 1991a.

<sup>7</sup> Bradley 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Bauman 1992.

<sup>9</sup> Kleiner and Matheson (eds.) 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Bartman 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Wood 2000.

and Elaine Fantham's *Julia Augusti* were inspirations for this thesis.<sup>12</sup> Both monographs displayed how meticulous methodology which drew on written historical sources, carefully handled, in combination with female material culture, could flesh out the two dimensional images of these women and cut through the "bad girl" stereotype often associated with powerful women. Cleopatra received similar scholarly rehabilitation by Duane Roller.<sup>13</sup> Treggiari's *Terentia, Tullia, and Publilia* demonstrated how to expertly analyze textual evidence of specific women while placing them in the wider context of their female contemporaries.<sup>14</sup> And *Turia*, by Josiah Osgood, revealed that similarly impressive analysis of a woman whose name is lost to history, could be rewarding and informative.<sup>15</sup> I have confined this abbreviated historiography to books, as the number of influential and innovative articles, and important collections, are too numerous to discuss here, and moreover many will be used throughout this thesis to assist in separating Octavia from her "good girl" stereotype.

I would like to briefly discuss what this thesis means when I refer to a traditional Roman *matrona* and the stereotype of the "good" Roman woman. As succinctly described by Fischler, "The ideal woman was noted for her beauty, fertility and faithfulness to her husband, as well as her ability to run the household. In short, the image is one of a refined woman whose life focused on the needs of her family and

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<sup>12</sup> Barrett 2001; Fantham 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Roller 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Treggiari 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Osgood 2014.

household.”<sup>16</sup> This *exemplum*, or moral example, of a Roman woman was influenced by legendary women of Rome’s past, such as the Sabine women who were tricked and kidnapped away from their families and married to Roman men. These women, rather than allowing their families and new husbands to fight a war over this offense, negotiated between the two parties, staying with their Roman husbands and reconciling their previous families to Rome.<sup>17</sup>

Octavia was born to the same mother as her famous brother Octavian; it would be foolish to assume Atia granted her motherly knowledge of the Roman social world and its political connotations only to her son. Similarly, Octavia would have observed her step-father Lucius Marcius Philippus (hereafter Philippus) when she resided in his home. Her first husband, Gaius Claudius Marcellus (hereafter Gaius Marcellus) was a correspondent of Cicero, a consul in his own right, and a political opponent of her family. She was sister to Octavian, the man who would go on to to defeat his political and military rivals and rise to become the sole leading man in Rome, paving the way for the Roman Republic to become the Roman Empire. Octavia’s second husband, Marcus Antonius (hereafter Antony) was her brother’s most formidable rival during his ascent to sole mastery of Rome. Additionally, Antony’s previous wife, Fulvia, as well as his next romantic liaison, Cleopatra, stood as contemporary examples of female misbehavior. When Octavia is placed within her historical context and within the network of contemporaries with whom she shared her life, Octavia’s decisions do not seem to be products of her “goodness,” but

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<sup>16</sup> Fischler 1994, 117.

<sup>17</sup> The Sabine women will be discussed more later. See pg. 33-34 n. 51.

rather the likely outcome of her acumen, observation, and response to the events happening around her. Octavia was witness to and/or partner in each of the aforementioned relationships which will be discussed fully in this thesis, but Octavia herself, despite her involvement in these relationships, was not problematized by classical male authors.

This thesis will not argue that Octavia had full agency over every decision in her life, but the assumption that she lacked all agency and was unable to learn from observations of her day-to-day life would be equally ill-advised. Rather, this thesis will present the tools which Octavia was given that had the potential to contribute to her success. Further, this thesis will argue that Octavia, by skillfully and successfully navigating dangerously fickle public opinion, assisted her brother Octavian in transforming the *exemplum* of a Roman *matrona*. Octavia took the moral example of a proper Roman *matrona* from the decaying Republic and transformed this *exemplum* into the renewed Roman state her brother was building. The new Roman woman Octavia embodied was a *matrona* who expressed all the virtues lauded in the treasured Republic, while in addition exemplifying those virtues important to the new Roman state.

Many of the aforementioned books and studies discuss Octavia in passing, or in an appendix or short chapter.<sup>18</sup> As an unproblematic woman, a “good” *matrona*, admired by her peers and historians of both antiquity and modernity, Octavia is often discussed in conjunction with her sister-in-law Livia. But Octavia’s early death in 11 BCE, in comparison to the long lived Octavian (d. CE 14) and the even longer lived Livia (d. CE

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<sup>18</sup> For example, Bartman 1999, 213-215; Wood 2000, 27-35, 41-63.

29), usually guarantee that Octavia is discussed quickly and moved past without extensive analysis. This thesis seeks to draw upon these numerous short discussions while also offering new analysis on Octavia's "good girl" reputation. By exposing the tendency toward stereotyping inherent within written record through attentive handling of androcentric classical sources, this study will carefully seek to rehabilitate Octavia as an astute, rather than "good" woman. Though large portions of Octavia's life are not examined by the classical sources, this thesis will turn to the people with whom Octavia was connected, her mother, step-father, husbands, and brother, as well as her female contemporaries with whom she was compared, Fulvia and Cleopatra, in an effort to more fully examine the entirety of Octavia's life.

Additionally, while drawing upon her lived experiences and agency within the written record, the material culture associated with Octavia will also be integrated to produce a three-dimensional portrayal. An examination of the innovative coins which displayed Octavia's portrait as the first mortal Roman woman, the busts and cameos which displayed her beauty and "goodness," and the portico which she built in Rome will all contribute to understanding Octavia as a woman who was not merely "good," but was instead well-versed in her understanding of Roman traditional values and influential in transforming what it meant to be a Roman *matrona* under the new, innovative Roman state her brother was constructing.

## A Reassessment of Octavia's age

To begin, a discussion of Octavia's birth in 69 and from there, a reassessment of her age at the time of various life events should be undertaken.<sup>19</sup> The following sections of this thesis, especially those focused on her early life and first marriage, will suggest that Octavia was younger than previously assumed. A brief outline of the details relevant to this conclusion will be given here, followed by more detailed discussion to follow. Since there is no direct evidence suggesting an exact date for her birth, scholars have estimated Octavia's age to be approximately fifteen in 54 when Suetonius writes that she was offered by Gaius Julius Caesar (hereafter Julius Caesar) as a potential bride to Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (hereafter Pompey), thus implying her date of birth to have been sometime in 69 (Suet. *Iul.* 27).<sup>20</sup>

Yet this estimate of age at time of marriage (and thus, date of birth) is somewhat problematic when scrutinized. If she was born in 69, it would mean that Octavia did not have Marcellus, her only child with a firmly established birth year, until 42, when she was twenty-seven years old. The dates of birth for her two daughters with her first husband, Marcella Major and Marcella Minor, are unclear.<sup>21</sup> Twenty-seven seems late for

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<sup>19</sup> All following dates are BCE, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Wood 2000, 30-35.

<sup>21</sup> Syme 1986, 143 postulates that Marcella Major was born in 43, based off her marriage to Agrippa in 28 (Dio 53.1.2). This assumes Marcella Major married at the age of fifteen. Thus it is possible she could have married at an earlier age and so could have been born after her brother in 42, but before her younger sister. Syme postulates that Marcella Minor was born in 39, based off Dio's mention of Octavia being pregnant when she married Antony (Dio 48.31.3). It is possible that Marcella Major was born in 40, just before or immediately following her mother's remarriage. There is a lack of evidence concerning the lives of the Marcellas, making it difficult to pinpoint their exact years of birth. See pg. 147-148 and n. 240 for more on the ages of the Marcellas.

a woman who had five children survive to adulthood. Roman mothers were encouraged to have children as soon as possible, as it solidified the familial connections their marriages encouraged. Additionally, there is no mention of miscarriages or prematurely born children in any of the sources as there is in association with her sister-in-law, Livia (Suet. *Aug.* 63). Of course, this discrepancy in evidence could be explained by a specific propaganda need of Octavia's brother. Octavian began passing legislation as early as 18 which applied to women with three children.<sup>22</sup> Octavia had already surpassed this number of children at the time the bill was introduced, while Octavian's wife Livia only had two sons, and thus a mention of an infant death was required to demonstrate her fulfillment of this legal requirement.

If, however, Octavia were born perhaps three years later than the traditional estimate, in 66 rather than 69, then the birth of Marcellus in 42, when she was twenty-four years old, is less problematic. This later date for Octavia's birth would also fall in line with how confidently Julius Caesar offered his grand-niece to Pompey in 54. If she were only around twelve at the time, recently a bride with her marriage not yet consummated either because of her age, young even by aristocratic standards, or because of reservations on the part of Gaius Marcellus in relation to her complicated familial connections,<sup>23</sup> then divorce would have been even easier.

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<sup>22</sup> See Frank 1975 and Galinsky for Octavian's moral, marriage, and reproductive legislation.

<sup>23</sup> These adversarial familial connections will be discussed in detail later.

Though she had likely reached the age of menarche at the time of her marriage, young girls are less fertile, making pregnancy less likely even if their marriages are consummated immediately.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, beginning in 49, Gaius Marcellus was often not in the city of Rome because of his dangerous position as an outspoken opponent of Octavia's great-uncle Julius Caesar. These circumstances made conception less likely as husband and wife did not reside together and, considering Octavia's husband and great-uncle were on opposite political sides of the civil war, conjugal visits might have been awkward and maybe even difficult to arrange. It is probably not chance that the couple did not have Marcellus until 42, two years after the death of Julius Caesar and at the end of the conflict which had divided the interests of husband and wife.

This revised date of birth would also make Octavia much nearer in age to her brother Octavian. Close proximity in age between brother and sister could help to explain some of the devotion often implied in the circumstances of their relationship. Octavia had influence with her brother in a way not matched by many other people's sibling relationships, especially brother-sister ones. After he gave her in marriage to seal an accord between the men, Octavian trusted her to be his ambassador with Antony, his rival. Subsequently, she managed to ignore Octavian's order to leave the house of Antony. Even if both his order and her refusal were possibly a publicity stunt intended to harm the reputation of Antony, Octavian was apparently unbothered with the public belief that Octavia possessed the power to refuse him.

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<sup>24</sup> Amundsen and Diers 1969, 125-132; Hufnagel 2012, 15-20.



An adjustment of three years in her birth date may appear small or inconsequential, but it allows reflection about Octavia that has not been attempted previously. With this age shift in mind, an examination of Octavia's life can now be undertaken.

## CHAPTER ONE: Early Life

### Octavia's mother, Atia

Octavia's mother Atia was the daughter of Julia, Julius Caesar's sister, and Marcus Atius Balbus. Her father Balbus came from the local gentry in Aricia, and was related to Pompey on his mother's side.<sup>25</sup> Balbus himself was of senatorial rank, and his family included others of senatorial rank. Though he never attained the consulship, Balbus was one of twenty men appointed to the commission by the *lex Julia agraria* to distribute lands in Campania (Suet. *Aug.* 4.1). Atia's mother Julia was the daughter of G. Julius Caesar and Aurelia of the Aurelii Cottae, a family of the old plebeian nobility.

Atia's first marriage was to Gaius Octavius (hereafter Octavius), a wealthy equestrian from the neighboring town of Velitrae. Octavius had been married once before to Ancharia, with whom he was the father of Octavia Major. He and Atia had two children together, Octavia Minor and Octavian. In 61, Octavius ascended to the praetorship and was then allotted the governorship of Macedonia. On the way to his province, Octavius was commanded by the senate to eliminate the refugee survivors from the armies of Spartacus and Catiline who had run away and were in possession of land near Thurii (Suet. *Aug.* 3.1). Suetonius reports Octavius acquitted himself nobly in this task, and made a fine governor of Macedonia. He treated his neighboring allies with generosity, and Suetonius described him as fair and worthy of emulation (Suet. *Aug.* 3.2). In 58, on the way back to Rome, before he could put his name forward for the consulship, Octavius died suddenly. If Octavia was born around 66, as postulated above, she would

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<sup>25</sup> Syme 1939, 31, 112.

have been approximately six when her father left for Macedonia. She would not have seen him again before his death three years later.

Octavia's young life would have been heavily influenced by her mother, particularly because of her father's early death. It is likely that as a child of the upper class, Octavia received some form of academic tutelage. Though it is extremely difficult to pinpoint exactly how upper class Roman women received their education, illiteracy among upper class women was clearly rare by the Late Republican period.<sup>26</sup>

Additionally, Tacitus lists Atia, along with her mother Aurelia, as model mothers when it came to raising their noble children (Tac. *Dial.* 28). This praise includes the attentiveness with which they cultivated the education of their offspring by assiduously supervising the appointment of their educators.<sup>27</sup>

Though Atia and Octavia are not mentioned specifically as beneficiaries of their illustrious mothers' care, it would be wrong to assume that they were ignored. The education of young girls had a different aim than that of their male counterparts; rather than being educated to be public speakers, girls were being educated to make responsible, competent wives. Their education was not limited to spinning wool or weaving. Both mother and daughter were certainly literate, and in light of the fact that Octavia's portico would later house both a Latin and Greek section in her library, she likely learned both languages.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Hemelrijk 1999, 17-96.

<sup>27</sup> See Morgan 2011 for an overview of socialization and education of children in antiquity.

<sup>28</sup> See pg. 166-172 for Octavia's portico.

Beyond arranging a formal education in subjects such as language and grammar, Atia would have provided an example for performing the duties of a wife.<sup>29</sup> It appears that the family lived in Velitrae at least until Atia's remarriage to Philippus. This means that Octavia, young as she was, would have grown up observing Atia in her role as matron of the house.<sup>30</sup> Though she may seem too young to comprehend what her mother's duties entailed, it should be remembered that Octavia, and women like her in the upper class, would have been expected to be ready for marriage, and thus adult life, by the time of their menarche, which could happen to girls as early as eleven or twelve.

Atia's experience as a wife and mother provided her with ample lessons which she could impart to her daughter. This is not to suggest some female-specific lore shrouded in mystery passed down matrilineally, but rather practical and useful knowledge which Octavia needed to perform her duties as wife and mother, in a way that would bring honor to her family. The *exemplum* of a proper Roman mother and wife in the late Republic was well developed; the ideal was a woman fierce with love for her children, like Cornelia, and obedient in her *pietas* to her father and husband, like Lucretia. As Roman women did not have the option of a direct political role to play, their honor was in being the mothers of the next generation of fine Roman men.<sup>31</sup> Octavia was born to an

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<sup>29</sup> See Culham 2004 for an overview of Roman women throughout the history of the Republic.

<sup>30</sup> For further discussions on the responsibility of Roman matrons, see Carp 1981; Treggiari 1991a and 2007, 32-39; Bauman 1992; Dixon 1983 and 1992; Hemelrijk 1999.

<sup>31</sup> For further discussion of Roman mothers, see Hemelrijk 1999, 17-96; Dixon 1988, 2001a, 2011; Dasan 2011; Jones 2012; Lovén 2016. For a discussion on Roman girlhood, see Caldwell 2015. See Hillard 1992 for an examination of politically active women in the late Republic.

excellent example of a mother who herself had been born to a fine Republican mother. The elite upper class into which Octavia was born also shaped this example. Of course, not all classes of Roman women would seek to emulate this class specific example, since the economic concerns of lower class women required their attention be focused elsewhere, although motherhood was valued regardless of class.<sup>32</sup>

Very soon after the death of Octavius, Atia was married to Philippus. In terms of lineage and family connections she was an attractive bride, granted the ambitions and political acumen of her new husband's family. The Marcii Philippii were plebeian nobility, and Philippus' father had been consul in 91. As a connection to both Pompey and Julius Caesar, Atia gave Philippus a link to two of the leading men of Rome. For Atia too the marriage was advantageous, more so than her first. Octavius had been a wealthy man and a praetor, but the praetorship was the highest office the Octavii had ever achieved. Philippus, on the other hand, was from a family with multiple consuls and praetors in his lineage, and would soon be a consul himself. Octavia would have been witness to the speed with which her mother was remarried, and to the beginning of her mother's new relationship. It would be an experience Octavia could look to when she, like Atia, lost her first husband and was quickly remarried as a part of her family's continuing political program.

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<sup>32</sup> On the economic concerns of the lower class, see Dixon 2001a and b, 2004; Saller 2011; Becker 2016.

### **Octavia's step-father, Lucius Marcius Philippus cos. 56**

Atia married Philippus in 57, after the death of her husband Octavius in 58. In the time between her father's death and her mother's remarriage, Octavia lived with her mother Atia. Lacking agnate relations Octavia and her younger brother Octavian would have been assigned guardians, but the names of these guardians have not survived. It is difficult not to hazard a guess that their great-uncle Julius Caesar was among them. While this could have been the case, there is no direct evidence.<sup>33</sup>

When Atia married Philippus, her children would have moved with her into their new stepfather's household. Unlike her younger brother Octavian, Octavia would not have spent long under the roof of Philippus, since she was married to Gaius Marcellus by 54. The puzzle of Octavia's first marriage offers insight into the possible motivations and power plays of Philippus and Julius Caesar, rather than those of Octavia herself. She would, however, have likely been aware of the events happening around her, and well aware of those events that directly affected her.

Suetonius wrote that in 54 Julius Caesar offered the already married Octavia as a bride for the recently widowed Pompey. Pompey's wife Julia, Julius Caesar's only acknowledged child, had recently died in childbirth (Suet. *Iul.* 27.1). This off-handed employment of Octavia, as an easily used political pawn, shows her great-uncle assumed he could use her to advance his political machinations by reconfirming his alliance with Pompey, implying a certain degree of closeness between Julius Caesar and Octavia's

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<sup>33</sup> Gray-Fow 1988, 186.

family. Julius Caesar seemed to believe that a divorce between Octavia and Gaius Marcellus would be easily acquired. Such a divorce would not have been unusual.<sup>34</sup> Despite the modern concept of romantic marriage, it is clear that Romans did not attribute the same idealized values to their marriages. Upper class Roman families considered marriages political alliances, rather than romantic pairings based on desire.<sup>35</sup> This passage in Suetonius also reveals that Julius Caesar believed himself capable of convincing Octavia's new step-father Philippus, her mother Atia, and likely Octavia and Gaius Marcellus themselves, to abide by his offer.

Does this proposal by Julius Caesar imply that he, not Philippus, a year or so earlier, had been the architect of Octavia's marriage to Gaius Marcellus? The sources supply no direct answer. However, certain events suggest that Philippus, rather than Julius Caesar, masterminded Octavia's first marriage. By marrying Atia, Philippus allied himself with both Pompey and Julius Caesar. On the other hand, he arranged the marriage of his own biological daughter Marcia to Cato, an outspoken critic of the extra-legal "first triumvirate" of Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Crassus. Based on these two marriage alliances, Philippus was a shrewd calculator unwilling to commit himself to one single political faction.<sup>36</sup> The future was unclear and potentially life-threatening and it would have been wise to cultivate relationships with a wide sampling of those in positions of potential power, as well as those who opposed them. It is easy from a historical distance

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<sup>34</sup> For further discussion of divorce, see Bradley 1991b, 156-176; Treggiari 1991b.

<sup>35</sup> For further discussion of Roman marriage. see Treggiari 1991a; Bradley 1991a; Dixon 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Syme 1939, 128.

to judge that Philippus was overly cautious, or perhaps even fickle, for cultivating allegiances on both sides of the fence, but he was not the only politically active man to display such caution. Late Republican Rome was a volatile place where power could shift quickly and dangerously. A prudent man of moderate and conciliatory tendencies should not be damned for cautiously negotiating the middle path.

His contemporaries noticed Philippus' proclivity for moderation. Cicero did not hide his lack of respect for Philippus. In letters to his brother Quintus, Cicero notes that in 57-56 during Philippus' term as a consul Philippus simply follows the lead of his co-consul, and thus is a political non-factor (Cic. *Q. Frat.* 5.2/2.1 and 9.2/2.5). In 49, at the outbreak of the civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey, Cicero notes that Philippus has left Rome for Naples. This outbreak of hostility was particularly complicated for Philippus as he was married to Julius Caesar's niece while at the same time his own daughter Marcia was married to Cato, a political adversary of Julius Caesar. By withdrawing from Rome, but not leaving the peninsula of Italy, he distanced himself from the situation while not committing himself to either side (Cic. *Att.* 183.4/9.15). This strategic move allowed Philippus to be passed over by the senate when they handed out defensive assignments for the imminent civil war (Caes. *B Civ.* 1.6) and similarly Julius Caesar did not force his nephew-in-law into action (Cic. *Att.* 195.10/10.4).

Cicero found Philippus to be tiresome (Cic. *Att.* 246/12.9) and dreaded his visits (Cic. *Att.* 253/12.16), though they seem frequent since the two men had villas near one another. The orator notes Philippus is back and forth from Rome in 45 (Cic. *Att.* 254/12.18) and in the same year, he writes that Philippus and Julius Caesar met privately



for many hours in Philippus' house (Cic. *Att.* 353/13.52). Though these references are brief, they indicate that Philippus was actively attempting to walk the fine middle line in Roman politics. He did not meet with his uncle-in-law in Rome, but perhaps he counseled Julius Caesar on the dictator's infamous will.

Octavian was not aware of the contents of Julius Caesar's will at the time of his murder; he found out only after his great-uncle's death that Julius Caesar had adopted him and made Octavian his primary heir (Suet. *Aug.* 8). Antony, who assumed he would be Julius Caesar's heir, was a powerful adversary and Octavian's acceptance of Julius Caesar's will had the potential to be hazardous to his young life. The troops at Apollonia, where Octavian was given the news of Julius Caesar's death, offered Octavian their allegiance. His friends Agrippa and Salvidienus urged him to take command of the troops an action which could have been interpreted as an overtly aggressive, illegal seizure of military power, but he declined (Vell. *Pat.* 2.59). Thus, Octavian, cautious enough to test the political climate before he assumed the possibilities contained within the inheritance given to him by his great-uncle, returned to Italy as a private citizen without troops. If Philippus had previously been made aware of Julius Caesar's intention to adopt Octavian, perhaps during their meeting Cicero mentioned in 45, it is likely Philippus, possibly even before Julius Caesar died, urged his step-son to err on the side of caution before the young man entered Italy.<sup>37</sup>

Directly after the Ides of March, Cicero writes that Philippus hosted his step-son Octavian in his house near Cicero's (Cic. *Att.* 365/14.11). It is perhaps during this visit

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<sup>37</sup> Gray-Fow 1988, 190-192.

that Philippus urged Octavian not to accept his inheritance, because he and Atia worried about the implications for the young man (Suet. *Aug.* 8). Octavian did not take their advice, and headed to Rome to enter into his inheritance. Within the same letter in which Cicero writes of Philippus and Octavian's meeting, the orator shows his fatal misjudgment of Octavian's devotion to Cicero. This letter also demonstrates Philippus' early involvement in the career of his step-son. One begins to wonder if Cicero also underestimated Philippus' astute assessment of the situation. He notes that Philippus did not yet call Octavian by his new adopted name of Caesar (Cic. *Att.* 366/14.12). While Cicero perceived this as Philippus' unwillingness to honor "the boy," it seems more likely that Philippus was playing the same game of neutrality that he had been all along.

Cicero mentions that Philippus does not think that Octavian is to be taken too seriously, but in spite of this, the orator believes Octavian should be encouraged (Cic. *Att.* 390/15.12). He goes on to write that he is not impressed with Philippus and his, in Cicero's estimation, cautious approach toward favoring Octavian (Cic. *Att.* 390/15.12, 425/16.14). It must be remembered that Cicero's hatred of Antony forced him to support the seemingly malleable Octavian. Perhaps, because of this blindness to Octavian's politically ambitious intentions, Cicero was also blind to the fact that Philippus' neutrality was not weakness, but a commitment to survival by a cultivation of a public indifference to his step-son. It appears that despite his high estimation of his own judgement, Cicero was not politically astute enough to recognize Philippus' caution was not a character flaw, nor astute enough to recognize the danger that Octavian posed to the orator's beloved Republic.

From a historical distance, it is difficult not to pity Cicero for his inability to see what was directly in front of him. He writes to Brutus that Philippus voted Octavian a statue, which Cicero professes did not seem too extravagant of a gesture at this time when Octavian had saved them from the control of Antony (Cic. *Ad Brut.* 23/1.15). Still Cicero believed that Octavian was controllable and should be encouraged as a counterweight to the dangerous Antony. Philippus, for his part, appears to have been a constant support to Octavian, discrete as that support was in public. For example, Philippus voted Octavian a statue, but only when it was politically appropriate. Philippus professed indifference, but it is clear he was not a passive observer.

In the contentious aftermath of Julius Caesar's death, Cicero unloaded his vitriol on Philippus for his role in negotiations with Antony. Philippus, along with Piso, was sent to Antony with terms from the senate. Antony refused the senate's terms, and sent Philippus and Piso back to the senate with demands of his own (Cic. *Fam.* 363.1/12.4). As an outspoken opponent of Antony, Cicero read any moderate action towards Antony as vile. This criticism of Philippus can be seen again in Cicero's *Philippics*, when he harps upon what he sees as the failure of Piso and Philippus (Cic. *Phil.* 8.10 and 9.1). Again, Cicero's hatred of Antony, especially pronounced in the *Philippics*, colors his treatment of Philippus. The orator does not see Philippus as cautiously choosing neutrality as a means of personal protection or building of beneficial relationship, but as failing in his duty to the Republic.

Philippus' tendency toward cautious cultivation of both of the opposing factions in Rome as demonstrated by his actions above could well have been a motivating factor

in arranging Octavia's marriage to Gaius Marcellus. In the early 50s, it appeared that Pompey's star was in the ascendant over Julius Caesar's.<sup>38</sup> His marriage to Atia tipped Philippus toward Julius Caesar and his daughter Marcia's marriage to Cato pushed him away from both Julius Caesar and Pompey. The marriage of his new step-daughter to one of the Claudii Marcelli would balance against these alliances by attaching his family to supporters of Pompey. For the Claudii Marcelli, a marriage with the Marcii Philippi would perhaps sway votes towards the consulship which had eluded their family since 152.<sup>39</sup> Political support generated by marital ties flowed both ways and around the same time as Octavia's betrothal to Gaius Marcellus, Philippus was elected consul in 56 with Gn. Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus, a relative of Crassus. Neither consul was considered particularly influential politically.<sup>40</sup> One wonders if the tangled web of Philippus' connections weakened his political clout while at the same time making sure his family's name continued to enjoy a level of prominence in a period when sharp political divides threatened ruin for those caught with allegiance to the wrong side.

Julius Caesar's ascent was still very much unforeseen in the early 50s; it was not yet clear that he would restore the glory of his patrician name. Though Julius Caesar had not been the one who allowed his family name to fall into disrepair, he had yet to prove he would be the one to rehabilitate the Julii. It seems unlikely that Julius Caesar would have been the one to arrange Octavia's marriage to Gaius Marcellus in 56-55; Gaius

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<sup>38</sup> See Syme 1939, 28-46; Saben-Clare 1971; Gruen 1974; Wiseman 1994b; Mackay 2009, 210-284 for an overview of the early 50s.

<sup>39</sup> Syme 1939, 19; Gruen 1974, 61, 102.

<sup>40</sup> Syme 1939, 36; Gruen 1974, 146.

Marcellus was a thorn in Julius Caesar's side throughout his consulship in 50, even though he had been married to Octavia for at least four years. Gaius Marcellus' dislike of Julius Caesar in 50 was likely already in place at the time of his marriage to Octavia in 56-55.

Of course, Julius Caesar was probably aware of Octavia's marriage, even if he did not craft it himself. Politically, it would not be a bad idea to forge a marriage connection with the Claudii Marcelli, a noble plebeian house, while Julius Caesar worked to raise his own family's name to prominence once more. Indeed, it appeared that Julius Caesar would be a leading man of Rome for at least a while longer considering the political moves he began to make in the mid 50s: the marriage of his daughter Julia to Pompey in 58, the so-called triumviral agreement between Crassus, Pompey, and himself in 56, and the extension of his command by five years. Philippus benefitted early on from the alliance forged with the marriage of Octavia to Gaius Marcellus: he ascended to the consulship in 56. At this time, political power was shared more evenly between Pompey and Julius Caesar. Subsequently, as Julius Caesar began surpassing Pompey in the late 50s, he felt he possessed enough power as to use Octavia's marriage as his own political tool with little resistance from her immediate family.

The assumption that the currently married Octavia would be divorced without difficulty is easier to understand in this light. Octavia's step-father and mother would not have stood in the way of her great-uncle's desire for a continued alliance with Pompey: the new marriage would have cemented ties with both men. Even Gaius Marcellus might have been convinced, if he believed his generous act would curry favor with his ally

Pompey. As for Octavia herself, perhaps she too would have understood that her divorce and subsequent remarriage was in her own best interests. At least she likely would have understood that marriage to one of the two most powerful men in Rome, the other being her great-uncle, meant personal protection, both politically and physically. If the relationship were to sour between them and one man went on to dominate the other, Octavia would still be safe because of her close connection with both men.

In the end, Pompey did not accept Julius Caesar's offer and Octavia remained married to Gaius Marcellus until he died in 40. During the turbulent 50s, as Pompey and Julius Caesar struggled to achieve and maintain power, Philippus cautiously navigated the dangerous political climate. When civil war broke out in 49, Philippus withdrew from Rome and waited out the conflict as a neutral party. No matter if it was Philippus or Julius Caesar who arranged her marriage with Gaius Marcellus, Octavia's marriage gave her an intimate look at the political machinations of the late Roman Republic. She saw her step-father, and at a further distance her great-uncle, carefully cultivate relationships with men on all sides of the political conflicts of the day. Indeed, her own marriage served as an example of such cultivation. The lessons of Philippus in cautious neutrality and diplomacy would serve Octavia well in her marriage with Gaius Marcellus.

## CHAPTER TWO: Marriages

### Octavia's first husband, Gaius Claudius Marcellus cos. 50

Gaius Marcellus came from the Claudii Marcelli, a noble plebeian family which had lacked a consul since 152. He would have been in his thirties when he married Octavia, likely already involved in politics on some level. As a noble, he would have been expected to pursue the *cursus honorum*, which traditionally included initial attempts to gain offices around the age of thirty.<sup>41</sup>

Gaius Marcellus does not distinguish himself in the ancient sources until the mid 50s, giving the impression that he, like Octavia, did not act outside of acceptable Roman behavioral norms. Humorously, Cicero's earliest mention of Octavia's soon-to-be husband in late 57 was not in reference to any pressing matter, but to complain to his friend Atticus that Gaius Marcellus was snoring so loudly that he could be heard by Cicero, his next-door neighbor (Cic. *Att.* 75.5/4.3). This silly detail reveals that Gaius Marcellus kept a house in Rome, so Octavia, moving from her step-father Philippus' to her new husband's home, would not have needed to relocate far when they married.

The mid to late 50s were dominated by the power of Pompey and Caesar, but violence and unrest churned just under the surface of their dominion. The riots of Milo and Publius Clodius Pulcher (hereafter Clodius) in 54 exposed how divided the elite of Rome were, and when, in 52, Milo murdered Clodius, the city descended into disorder.

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<sup>41</sup> Harlow and Laurence 2002, 65-78, 104-117.

Pompey was granted special permission to serve as sole consul for the year in an effort to restore order to the city.<sup>42</sup>

Though he had previously held lower political positions, such as praetor, it was in the year 50 that Gaius Marcellus would enter the political main stage upon his election to the consulship. In August of 51 Caelius Rufus wrote to Cicero about the latest news, including this recent election of Gaius Marcellus (Cic. *Fam.* 81/8.4). A cousin of Gaius Marcellus, M. Claudius Marcellus (hereafter M. Marcellus), had been consul in 51, and had begun harassing Julius Caesar about his command in Gaul. A combination of factors kept M. Marcellus from being successful. Moreover, his attempts to harass Julius Caesar attracted Pompey's ire, thus losing him Pompey's support (App. *B. Civ.* 2.26).

Additionally, Gaius Marcellus was being taken to court by the man whom he had beaten in the consular election. In September of 51, Caelius Rufus wrote again to Cicero with news from Rome. A scheduled senatorial debate was necessarily postponed by a trial. Gaius Marcellus, now consul-elect, had been brought to trial by M. Calidius, his competitor, for electoral malpractice (Cic. *Fam.* 82/8.9). The postponed debate Caelius Rufus refers to here is the one concerning Julius Caesar's command and though he was brought to trial, Gaius Marcellus was not convicted and went on to be consul the next year.

Cicero wrote to Gaius Marcellus directly to congratulate him on his victory, as well as to flatter the newly elected consul (Cic. *Fam.* 99/15.7). Cicero also wrote similar

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<sup>42</sup> See Syme 1939, 28-39; Saben-Clare 1971; Gruen 1974, 294-299, 337-350; Wiseman 1994b for an overview of the mid to late 50s.



laudatory letters to the consul-elect's father, also called Gaius, (Cic. *Fam.* 100/15.8) and his previously mentioned cousin M. Marcellus, consul in 51. (Cic. *Fam.* 101/15.9). These letters to Gaius Marcellus and his father both mention Cicero's gratitude and respect toward Gaius Marcellus' mother, Junia. Though the letters contain little detail on exactly what Junia has done to deserve such praise from Cicero,<sup>43</sup> it is interesting to the present discussion to consider that Octavia would have known Junia as her mother-in-law. Though, frustratingly, there is little more to discuss concerning Cicero's short mention. Junia, a respected, well-behaved Roman woman, would have provided Octavia with another example of a successful *matrona* in late Republican Rome. Junia appears to have successfully navigated between the private world of family and the public world of politics, through indirect female intervention. Thus Octavia's mother-in-law Junia would have served as an additional example to Octavia of how an elite woman could inhabit both the public and private worlds without drawing the ire of her male contemporaries.

When Caelius Rufus wrote again in October of 51, he caught Cicero up on the senate decree concerning the delayed debate on the consular provinces, a decree which included Julius Caesar's command in the Gallic provinces. Rather anti-climactically, it was stated in the decree that Gaius Marcellus and L. Paullus, consuls in 50, would bring the matter of the provinces before the senate (Cic. *Fam.* 84/8.8). Thus the denouement of M. Marcellus' attempt to harass Julius Caesar was postponed into the consulship of his

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<sup>43</sup> Treggiari 2007, 66 suggests that Junia assisted Cicero and his family during the orator's exile.

cousin. This senate decree set up Gaius Marcellus to be in a position to oppose Julius Caesar in 50, during his own consulship.

At about sixteen, already married for at least four years, Octavia became the wife of a consul. As a woman, she would have been excluded from the official politics, but Roman houses were not private domiciles. The patron-client system which dictated the social relations between men of all classes would have been a large part of Octavia's life.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Octavia herself could have been a patroness at this time as she certainly would later in life: Athenodorus addressed a book to her (Plut. *Publ.* 17.5) and the architect Vitruvius writes that it was Octavia who recommended him to Octavian's service (Vitr. *De arch.* 1.praef 2-3).<sup>45</sup> Even though she did not have direct contact with the senate, it is likely that Gaius Marcellus brought the social aspect of politics home with him. Guests and clients of varying degrees of intimacy would be welcomed into Octavia's home where she likely had a loom and marriage bed placed in full view to showcase her adherence to traditional female virtues associated with wool work and procreation.<sup>46</sup>

With the constant stream of politicians and clients moving through her house, in addition to the perpetual presence of slaves, Octavia would have been surrounded by people and information. Even if Octavia did not talk about politics while she entertained

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<sup>44</sup> See Deniaux 2006, 401-420 for an overview of the patron/client system during the Roman Republic.

<sup>45</sup> The role of Octavia as patroness will be expanded upon later in this thesis during the discussion of the material culture associated with her. See pg. 154-172.

<sup>46</sup> See Wallace-Hadrill 1996; Nevett 1997; George 1997; Hales 2003; Hölkeskamp 2004; Allison 2007; Trümper 2012 for further discussions of houses and gender.

her guests, she would have heard a variety of different conversations which took place within her household every day. Dining was a social occasion, and saliently, Romans engaged in co-ed dining. Women reclined with men during dinner, a practice which scandalized their Greek counterparts. Regardless of the perceived impropriety, co-ed dining allowed women another opportunity to be social, and the possibility to engage indirectly with politics over dinner. Thus, Octavia *could* have talked politics in private with men, even if she could not participate publicly.<sup>47</sup>

Cicero wrote from Tarsus at the end of 51 to again flatter Gaius Marcellus, politely yet overtly begging the consul to aide him in passing his proposals through the senate (Cic. *Fam.* 108/15.10). Interestingly, at the beginning of this letter, Cicero notes that he delights in the goodwill not only of the Marcelli, but the Marcellini also. The Marcellini were a branch of the Marcelli who had been adopted into the Corneli Lentuli. The most famous Marcellini was Gn. Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus, the man who had served as co-consul with Philippus in 56.<sup>48</sup> Though there is no way to untangle the web of familial relations here, the relationship between Gaius Marcellus, Philippus, and Lentulus Marcellinus is intriguing. This is especially so because the marriage connection of Philippus' step-daughter Octavia to Gaius Marcellus closely coincided with the consulships of Philippus and Lentulus Marcellinus. To my mind, the connection increases

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<sup>47</sup> See Dixon 1983 for women's role in patronage and politics; see Roller 2005 for women reclining during dinner; see Wallace-Hadrill 1996 for questions of co-ed dining; Treggiari 2007, 36 succinctly notes, "The presence of a wife also made a difference to a man's social life."

<sup>48</sup> See pg. 18 above for the consulship of Philippus and Gn. Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus.

the likelihood that Philippus arranged Octavia's marriage, simply because of the proximity of the marriage alliance to the consulship of both Octavia's relation, Philippus, and Gaius Marcellus' relation, Lentulus Marcellinus.

In April of 50, the matter of Cicero's Supplications were causing headaches in Rome. A supplication, or *supplicatio*, was a day, or days, when the Roman people engaged in public prayer in gratitude for a great victory. The orator was hoping to receive a supplication in recognition of his service to the Republic, specifically his quelling of the conspiracy of Cataline. Cicero was especially proud as his Supplications were the first granted for a civil victory, rather than a military victory. Caelius Rufus writes that Cicero had Gaius Marcellus, as well as his co-consul Paullus, to thank for their assistance in passing the motion. Caelius Rufus tempers this gratitude, however, by mentioning that Paullus helped more than Gaius Marcellus (Cic. *Fam.* 91/8.11).

Cicero wrote to now consul Gaius Marcellus in July from Tarsus, thanking him for his continued assistance (Cic. *Fam.* 118/15.11). It is likely that the gratitude contained in this letter is directly related to the issue of his Supplications, mentioned by Caelius Rufus previously. If Cicero was writing to ask favors of the consul, it is likely he was not the only man to do so. The lack of ancient evidence is perennially frustrating, yet it does not have to completely limit all analysis. It appears that Cicero wrote frequently and at length, and was lucky to have his letters survive. The lack of other men's personal letters should not be held as proof of a lack of writing. During his term as a consul, Gaius Marcellus feasibly received many letters similar to Cicero's, letters either asking for a favor, conveying gratitude, or offering assistance. Along with letters to other politicians,

Gaius Marcellus likely wrote to Octavia and she to him. As seen in the marriage of Cicero and Terentia, personal and political business was often discussed between husband and wife.<sup>49</sup>

During his year as consul, Gaius Marcellus managed to be a thorn in the side of Julius Caesar. Unlike his co-consul Paullus and the tribune Gaius Scribonius Curio (hereafter Curio), Octavia's husband could not be bribed into compliance (App. *B. Civ.* 2.26).<sup>50</sup> As an ally of Pompey, Gaius Marcellus, like his uncle before him, sought to check the rising power of Julius Caesar. The issue of Julius Caesar's Gaulish command was still in question. Gaius Marcellus proposed that successors be sent to Julius Caesar in the provinces, to relieve him of his command (App. *B. Civ.* 2.27). Appian and Plutarch both describe how the tribune Curio, now an apparent agent of Julius Caesar's, proposed a counter deal in December of 50: either Pompey, like Julius Caesar, would also be forced to give up his troops, or if Pompey was allowed to keep his command, so should Julius Caesar. Curio proposed that the rivals Julius Caesar and Pompey either remain equal in command or both become private citizens. The equality of the two men would keep the peace, Curio argued. This claim was too much for Gaius Marcellus to bear and he called Julius Caesar a robber, urging the Senate to name him a public enemy. With the

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<sup>49</sup> Treggiari 2007 discusses the relationship between Cicero and Terentia in detail. While only a small amount of letters between husband and wife survive (in comparison to the hundreds between Cicero and others), it is clear they communicated often – especially when Cicero was outside of Rome and Terentia was responsible for the care of their household. Gaius Marcellus and Octavia would be in a similar situation as Gaius Marcellus was frequently out of the city, especially after Julius Caesar took control of Rome.

<sup>50</sup> See n. 80 for Gruen 1974 argument against this accusation of bribery.

assistance of his allies Antony and Piso, Curio was successful in the end and they managed to have the opinion of the Senate taken. All of the votes went in favor of Julius Caesar (Plut. *Pomp.* 58.3-5; App. *B. Civ.* 2.27-30).

Plutarch writes that Gaius Marcellus refused to remain idle and listen to these speeches while threatening armies marched toward them. Octavia's husband declared he would send forth a man who would defend their country. At this proclamation, the city of Rome went into mourning at the possibility of a civil war. Gaius Marcellus, the Senate behind him, went to Pompey and demanded he protect Rome. As a desperate attempt to stop the building confrontation, Cicero tried to reach a settlement between Pompey and Julius Caesar, but it was rejected by both parties and so came to naught (Plut. *Pomp.* 58.6-59).

Appian tells a slightly different version, wherein Gaius Marcellus dismissed the Senate following the vote called by Curio, chiding all the senators for being slaves to Julius Caesar. A rumor now swept through Rome that Julius Caesar had already crossed the Alps and was marching on the city. Gaius Marcellus proposed that the legions near Capua should be brought to bear against Julius Caesar, as he was an enemy of the state. Curio opposed this measure, stating the rumors to be untrue. But Gaius Marcellus was not to be stopped, and told Curio he would act on his own authority as a consul. Hurrying to Pompey, Gaius Marcellus, with his co-consul Paullus at his side, proffered to Pompey a sword and commanded him to take the forces near Capua. With these and any other soldiers he needed to raise, Pompey should take to the field against Julius Caesar. Pompey, despairing his lack of options, accepted the responsibility reluctantly. Curio

attempted to stop Gaius Marcellus and Pompey, but lacked the legal authority (*App. B. Civ.* 2.29-30).

In a letter written to his friend Atticus months before this confrontation, in October of 50, Cicero bemoans his tenuous position vis a vis Pompey and Julius Caesar, asking his friend for advice on what to do when the contest between the two powerful men eventually comes to blows. Cicero reminds Atticus that it was he who suggested the orator become friendly with both men, and now he insists on Atticus' advice on how to proceed. The Marcelline Consulships had previously saved Cicero from having to involve himself in the sticky issue of Julius Caesar's command in Gaul, but he feared the loss of their protection (*Cic. Att.* 124/7.1). If Cicero, who was not a member of either family, was worried about proper behavior when caught between the two powerful men, then one can only imagine the worry which likely plagued Octavia, great-niece to Julius Caesar, but married to the staunch Pompeian supporter Gaius Marcellus. She was in a far more complicated situation knowing her husband was attempting to rouse Pompey to stop, if not destroy, her great-uncle.

The role of female peacemaker or negotiator was one with deep roots in Roman society. Roman tradition idealized the Sabine women, remembering them as negotiators between their families and their new Roman husbands, who had previously tricked their families and absconded with the women.<sup>51</sup> There was also the story of the mother and

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<sup>51</sup> Mentions of the Sabine women in *Cic. Rep.* 2.7, *Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom.* 2.30-47, *Livy* 1.9-13, *Ov. Fast.* 3.67-258 and *Ars am.* 1.101-134, and *Varro Ling.* 6.20 were all nearly contemporary with Octavia, while *Plut. Rom.* 14-20 was about century later.

wife of Coriolanus, of later Shakespearian fame, who went out to the Roman general with other matrons of Rome and persuaded him to stop his siege of Rome.<sup>52</sup> During her own lifetime, Octavia would live through the triumviral proscriptions in which contemporary Roman women would also be cast in the role of negotiating between hostile Roman men.<sup>53</sup> Roman women had a particularly difficult line to walk when it came to *pietas*, the complicated Roman virtue tangled up in duty, devotion, and filial loyalty. For a son, this virtue was less complicated; sons owed their *pietas* to their paterfamilias, which was usually their own father. The *pietas* of daughters after marriage became complicated, with their *pietas* dually owed to father and husband.

What might Octavia have thought when word of her great-uncle crossing the Rubicon reached Rome? Following the example of Pompey, her husband and other leading men of Rome fled the city before Julius Caesar's arrival. Akin to the situation of the wife of Cicero, Terentia, Octavia likely would have been left in charge of her husband's house in Rome.<sup>54</sup> She might have expected some level of protection because of her familial relation to the man marching upon Rome. In such an extraordinary situation as civil war, where is a woman's *pietas* owed? Though we are not told of any direct intervention by Octavia on the relationship between her husband and great-uncle, it is important to consider that she later mediated between her second husband, Antony, and

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<sup>52</sup> Mentions of Coriolanus in Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.39-55 and Livy 2.40 were nearly contemporary with Octavia, while Plut. *Cor.* was about a century later.

<sup>53</sup> The role of women in the proscriptions will be expanded upon during the later discussion of Fulvia, see pg. 62-71.

<sup>54</sup> See Treggiari 2007, 56-70, 100-117.



her brother Octavian.<sup>55</sup> To my mind, Octavia's later negotiation skill indicates that, while the relationship between Antony and Octavian was higher profile and thus more worthy of mention by historians, it was unlikely that the conflict between her brother and second husband was the first time she had brought these skills to bear. Her great-uncle's entrance into Rome and subsequent dictatorship would have offered her the opportunity to hone her mediation abilities.

In a letter to Atticus in May of 49, Cicero wrote from Cumae that Gaius Marcellus, like Cicero himself, had plans to flee mainland Italy, or at least he was pretending to have these same intentions (*Cic. Att.* 203/10.12). Two days later, again to Atticus, Cicero wrote that Servius had stayed the previous night with Gaius Marcellus near Liternum (*Cic. Att.* 205/10.13). Some days later, Cicero describes Gaius Marcellus in a letter to Atticus as timid, surpassed only by Servius in this trait, and possibly even complicit with Antony in his attempt to keep Cicero from leaving Italy. In fact, according to the orator, Gaius Marcellus even regretted his own consulship (*Cic. Att.* 207/10.15). It is interesting to see, even through the biased lens of Cicero, the change in the behavior and demeanor of Gaius Marcellus. Perhaps Cicero goes too far in characterizing Gaius Marcellus as regretting his appointment as consul, but it is not difficult to surmise that Octavia's husband likely worried for his own safety after his earlier denouncement of Julius Caesar.

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<sup>55</sup> Octavia's mediations between Antony and Octavian will be discussed at length below in the section on Octavia's marriage to Antony. See pg. 86-119.

It is unclear exactly when Gaius Marcellus decided to take a more moderate path with his great-uncle by marriage, but he never ended up leaving Italy. As Syme biting remarks, “the consul who had placed a sword in the hand of Pompeius [Pompey], mindful at last of his marriage-connection with [Julius] Caesar, abated his ardor.”<sup>56</sup> Perhaps Octavia played a role in Gaius Marcellus’ “mindful” remembrance of his wife’s family. There were only a few who could claim close blood kinship to Julius Caesar. After the death of his daughter Julia, Julius Caesar had no living children.<sup>57</sup> Thus, his sister’s children and grandchildren would have been important political allies.

Julius Caesar did not stay long in Rome after he dramatically crossed the Rubicon and took the city in 49. Pompey had fled from Rome to Brundisium and his navy. Julius Caesar, lacking ships to immediately pursue Pompey, went to Spain in late 49 to fight and defeat the Pompeian generals there. Pompey meanwhile, had made his way to Greece. Julius Caesar followed and the two fought, including the famous battle of Pharsalus where Julius Caesar bested Pompey. The defeated Pompey escaped to Egypt. Julius Caesar pursued him in 48, sailing across the Mediterranean to become a victor robbed of his prize: the Egyptian king had ignobly beheaded Pompey before Julius Caesar could claim true victory. The dictator would spend most of the next year in Egypt dealing with the tricky political situation he found himself in. After assisting Cleopatra in retaking her crown, Julius Caesar returned to Rome.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Syme 1939, 62.

<sup>57</sup> In 47 Julius Caesar would father Caesarion with Cleopatra, but he never acknowledged the boy.

<sup>58</sup> The narrative sketch given here is necessarily brief. See Syme 1939, 47-60; Rawson 1994a; Mackay 2009, 285-302 for a more detailed discussion of the events of 49-47.

Sometime near the end of 46, Cicero wrote to M. Marcellus, who had been consul in 51, and who had been active in his disapproval of Julius Caesar's command in Gaul. As mentioned earlier, M. Marcellus was unsuccessful in his attempt to thwart the rising power of Julius Caesar. In this letter, Cicero congratulates M. Marcellus on his foresight in seeing the danger of the present situation much earlier. But Cicero also cautions M. Marcellus to see reason, and hopes that he will return to Rome. Cicero goes on to write that Gaius Marcellus is interceding on his cousin's behalf, though the orator himself cannot be so forward as he is also in need of intercession (*Cic. Fam.* 230/4.7). Cicero writes again to M. Marcellus only days later, urging him again to heed the advice of Cicero and his cousin, Gaius Marcellus (*Cic. Fam.* 231/4.9).

From these letters it appears that Gaius Marcellus had by this time returned to Rome, and to his wife. If Octavia's husband was speaking to Julius Caesar, especially privately, about his cousin M. Marcellus, the meeting would likely have come from some effort by Octavia. Even if her assistance was nothing more than extending the invitation, her intervention would have furthered her husband's cause with her great-uncle. Though Gaius Marcellus' cousin did not completely appreciate the gesture; M. Marcellus writes back to the orator that he is grateful for the unwavering loyalty of Cicero and his cousin, since his other friends and the rest of his own family have turned against him. Though M. Marcellus does not want his pardon, he appreciates those who assisted him during this time (*Cic. Fam.* 232/4.11).

In a letter to Servius, Cicero explains in more detail how the matter of M. Marcellus' return was made possible. During a session of the Senate, though Julius

Caesar complained of M. Marcellus' acerbity, he remarked that he would not decline the Senate's petition on M. Marcellus' behalf. To achieve this end, the Senate had risen together when M. Marcellus was mentioned during a speech by L. Piso and together had approached Julius Caesar in supplication. Gaius Marcellus even went so far as to throw himself at the feet of Julius Caesar. Cicero sees a glimmer of hope in this outcome, as the matter was settled through words, rather than by violence (Cic. *Fam.* 203/4.4).<sup>59</sup>

This letter warrants attention for more than Cicero's tragic idealism. Gaius Marcellus' turnabout in relation to Julius Caesar was complete; from the man who once implored Pompey to protect Rome from the greed of Julius Caesar to the man who would throw himself at the dictator's feet, begging for the pardon of his cousin. This is not meant as a criticism of Gaius Marcellus, but as a reflection on the difficult situations which civil war created. Gaius Marcellus was in some ways fortunate to have familial connection to Julius Caesar through Octavia. This connection eased his transition across the divide the civil war had produced.

To my mind, Octavia likely played a role in this negotiation between her husband and her great-uncle. Octavia's education as a girl, moral and academic, would have provided a solid base from which her experiences, while married to a politician during the turbulent late 50s and early 40s, could build. This is not to say she was a perfect example of womanhood. Octavia likely made mistakes and blunders that are now

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<sup>59</sup> The pardon of M. Marcellus is mentioned in Livy *Per.* 115. Livy notes that he was unable to enjoy the pardon, as he was murdered. See also Cicero's *pro Marcello* and Val. Max. 9.11.4 for further information on M. Marcellus' murder.

consigned to the unknowable past. Still, the near perfect performance of her future successes in mediation imply an understanding gained through observation and practice and experience. Consider also that in 46 Octavia would have been just twenty years old,<sup>60</sup> and so she had faced these difficult years of strife between her husband and great-uncle in her late teens. These experiences as a young woman would serve her well in the years to follow.

In 45, Julius Caesar celebrated a quadruple triumph in Rome after his victory at Munda over what remained of Pompey's supporters. Additionally, he was granted the appointment of dictator for life. In the next year, Julius Caesar would serve as co-consul with Antony until his assassination in March at the hands of some Roman senators.<sup>61</sup> After the death of his great-uncle, Octavian, who was not in the peninsula, made his careful entrance, first into Italy and then Rome.<sup>62</sup> The extent of Gaius Marcellus and Octavian's relationship before this time is unknown. It is possible that Octavia's brother and husband did not know each other well, but their closeness soon after Octavian's arrival in Italy suggests a previous relationship. In May of 44, Cicero mentions in passing to Atticus that Gaius Marcellus is leaving the city (*Cic. Att.* 380/15.3), likely to join Philippus and the newly arrived Octavian. In June of the same year, Cicero brushes off the mention of Gaius Marcellus recommending the orator's writing to Octavian, though he concedes that Octavian seems attached to his sister's husband (*Cic. Att.* 390/15.12).

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<sup>60</sup> With her revised year of birth in 66.

<sup>61</sup> For an overview of 45-44, see Rawson 1994a; Mackay 2009, 304-314.

<sup>62</sup> Alongside the analysis given above in the discussion of Philippus on pg. 19, see Mackay 2009, 315-322; Toher 2004 closely examines the timeline of Octavian's arrival to Rome in 44.

By June of 44, only three months after the death of Julius Caesar, Gaius Marcellus and Octavian had grown close enough for the young Octavian to receive reading suggestions from his brother-in-law. As ever, it is impossible to discern whether Octavian was truly attached to Gaius Marcellus as Cicero believed, or if that was the appearance Octavian was cultivating. Either way, Octavia would have been present in Rome to help facilitate and cultivate the relationship between the two men.

By late in 44, Cicero had become annoyed with the behavior of both Philippus and Gaius Marcellus, and refuses to mention even their names in a letter to Cassius. In Cicero's view, Gaius Marcellus' fault was being taken in by Octavian, while Philippus' son was poised to serve as consul in a year when it was expected that Cassius and Brutus would be elected to the consulship (Cic. *Fam.* 344/12.2). Cicero complains to Atticus that Gaius Marcellus is canny, though without any information as to why (Cic. *Att.* 416/15.13).<sup>63</sup> He continues to mention both Philippus and Gaius Marcellus with annoyance in his letters to Atticus (Cic. *Att.* 425/16.14). Yet through his cultivation of a relationship with Octavian, it appears Gaius Marcellus has managed a feat which eluded Cicero: guaranteed safety in the city of Rome (Cic. *Att.* 426/16.15).

Since Cicero's letters stop in 43 with his death, there is little more to be known about the life of Gaius Marcellus. He and Octavia became parents three times over in the years between 44-40: two girls, Marcella Major and Marcella Minor, and a boy, Marcus

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<sup>63</sup> In his translation notes on Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, Vol. 6, Shackleton Bailey 1967, 295 speculates it is perhaps in reference to Gaius Marcellus and his relationship with Octavian.

Claudius Marcellus (hereafter Marcellus) in 42.<sup>64</sup> Gaius Marcellus died in 40 leaving Octavia (at about 26 years old) a widow with three young children. At this point, Octavia had been married to Gaius Marcellus for over half of her life and his death would have had a profound impact on her, whether her grief was for a loving husband or a political partner. If she needed to ease her grief, she would have had the support of her mother and many other women who, like Octavia, had lost their first husbands at a young age. Other than the emotional trauma of widowhood, there was also the logistical difficulty of caring for three children under the age of five. Moreover, the probability of remarriage loomed. Octavia, an elite and fertile woman, was too valuable to be left widowed for long and she must have given thought to who her next husband might be.

There is no available source for this period in Octavia's life, so we are left to wonder about not only her emotional state, but her practical living conditions. Octavia likely stayed in the house she had shared with her husband while she observed the conventional ten month period of mourning for him. She would not stay a grieving widow for long however. Conveniently, Fulvia, the wife of Antony, had died in the same year as Gaius Marcellus. With a speed which required legal intervention, Octavia was married to Antony as part of an arrangement intended to patch up relations between her brother and Antony.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See pg. 147-148 and n. 240 on the dearth of information surrounding the births of the Marcella Major and Marcella Minor.

<sup>65</sup> The convenient timing of the deaths of Gaius Marcellus and Fulvia to the political maneuverings of Octavian and Antony will be discussed in more detail in the following sections. See pg. 83-87.

Before moving to Octavia's marriage to Antony, this paper will turn first to Fulvia, the previous wife of Antony. This examination will illuminate the life of a woman of the same class living concurrently with Octavia. Fulvia too weathered the civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey as well as the fraught early years of the political relationship between Antony and Octavian. Both women shared a similar elite upbringing, both made politically advantageous marriages, and they likely even shared the same social circle, but Fulvia and Octavia lived very different lives.



### **Fulvia, wife of Publius Clodius Pulcher, Gaius Scribonius Curio, and Antony**

If Octavia epitomized the “good girl” *exemplum* of a proper Republican *matrona* during the 40s, then Fulvia evolved into her counterpart “bad girl” *exemplum*.<sup>66</sup> Yet, despite this difference in perceived image, the two women were of similar social status and so provide valuable counterpoints to each other. Fulvia was the daughter of two old, noble plebeian families: on her father M. Fulvius Bambalio’s side, the Fulvii, and on her mother Sempronia’s side, the Sempronii Tuditani. Neither family had recently held office, but as sole heir for both families Fulvia inherited a substantial fortune which made her an attractive bride (Cic. *Phil.* 3.16).

Sometime between 62 and 58, Fulvia married Publius Clodius Pulcher (hereafter Clodius), mentioned previously as Milo’s opponent in the riots of 52. Clodius’ family had experienced financial hardships after the death of his father (Varro *Rust.* 3.16.1-2) and Cicero denounced Clodius as a rapacious spendthrift (Cic. *Har. Resp.* 42). Thus, a wealthy bride would have improved Clodius’ personal and political situation with an influx of capital. This comparative poverty was not an uncommon predicament among

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<sup>66</sup> Fulvia’s life has been the focus of a number of articles: Münzer 1910 for primary source citations; Babcock 1965 presents Fulvia as a woman dedicated to the political careers of her husbands; Hallett 1977 discusses Fulvia’s presence at the siege of Perugia through an examination of sling bullets; Delia 1991 discusses what she sees as Fulvia’s overstated political influence; Bauman 1992, 83-89 presents a short biography of Fulvia and her influence in the 40s; Welch 1995 discusses Fulvia in relation to Clodius and Antony and the politics of the mid 40s; Virilouvet 2001 presents a short biography of Fulvia; Hallett 2006 discusses what more can be learned of Fulvia through her son Iullus Antonius; Brennan 2012 discusses the female generation of 63, which includes Fulvia; Hallett 2015 discusses Fulvia’s representation as a Roman warrior woman.

politically minded men. Campaigning for office was a significant expenditure and men often sought a wealthy bride to solve their politically induced financial woes.

Clodius was a man with a reputation.<sup>67</sup> In late 62, Clodius was accused of dressing as a woman to infiltrate the Bona Dea, a female exclusive religious festival, supposedly in order to meet Julius Caesar's wife, Pompeia. The scandal dominated early 61.<sup>68</sup> Clodius was eventually acquitted of all charges and Julius Caesar used the incident to divorce his wife Pompeia. She had been in charge of the festival, as the wife of the *pontifex maximus*, and although Julius Caesar maintained Pompeia's innocence, he divorced her regardless stating that the wife of the *pontifex maximus* needed to be beyond reproach (App. *B. Civ.* 2.14; Dio 37.46; Suet. *Iul.* 74).

Octavia would have been aware of this scandal. We know little of the Bona Dea festival beyond the fact that only female nobles could attend (Cic. *Mil.* 72).<sup>69</sup> If there was no age limit on attendees, it is possible Octavia would have been present, as it was her great-uncle's wife who was hosting the festival. Octavia's grandmother Julia and great-grandmother Aurelia were certainly in attendance (Suet. *Iul.* 74). If Octavia was too young, or too distantly related to attend the small festival, she would have nevertheless

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<sup>67</sup> For the purposes of this paper, only a very brief sketch of Clodius' fascinating, and often scandalous, life will be given. Tatum's excellent 1999 monograph is recommended for a much fuller examination of Clodius. For a sketch of Clodius' early political machinations, see Mackay 2009, 264-265.

<sup>68</sup> Even Cicero involved himself, testifying against Clodius' alibi. Plutarch suggests that Cicero did this at the prompting of his wife, Terentia, out of a jealous desire to ruin Clodius' sister, Clodia (Plut. *Cic.* 29.2-3). Treggiari 2007, 49-50 believes this to be an exaggeration by a source hostile to Cicero as it is unlikely Clodia, of the noble patrician Claudii, would be interested in marrying Cicero who was far beneath her rank.

<sup>69</sup> Scullard 1981, 16-117, 199-201.

heard about the scandal which touched her own family. Clodius' invasion of the Bona Dea festival offended the basic moral sensibilities of Romans by threatening the sanctity of the Vestals as well as the most noble Roman women.<sup>70</sup>

Fulvia too would have been aware of the Bona Dea scandal involving Clodius. By 58, at least, Fulvia and Clodius were married (Cic. *Phil.* 2.48) and the ages of their children suggest the two were married between 62 and 59.<sup>71</sup> So either Fulvia married Clodius just before the scandal of the Bona Dea festival in December of 62, or immediately following it, perhaps even during the political fall-out from the scandal in 61. Though there is no source which discusses Fulvia's opinion of the scandal, it is interesting that she either remained married to Clodius despite the scandal, or married Clodius while his political future was in potential jeopardy. This implies that she was a woman unafraid to wade into politically hazardous situations.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, it suggests Fulvia was a supportive and devoted wife even when her husband's behavior was notably mired in scandal.

A decade later, in 52, Clodius was murdered by Milo on the Appian Way. In his defense of Milo, Cicero makes a point of noting that on this particular day, the day he was murdered, Clodius was not traveling with his wife (Cic. *Mil.* 28, 55). To Cicero this is proof that it was Clodius who planned to attack Milo, not the other way around, as the prosecution claimed. Whether Cicero's claim is true or not is irrelevant to the surprisingly

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<sup>70</sup> Tatum 1999, 66-67.

<sup>71</sup> Tatum 1999, 60-61.

<sup>72</sup> Brennan 2012, 357, "...Clodius still must rank as one of the most transgressive figures that Republican Rome was to produce. Still that was not enough to put off one Fulvia..."

romantic notion that Fulvia was ordinarily Clodius' constant companion. In another unfavorable depiction, Clodius was described metaphorically as clinging to his wife's robe, completely subordinated to Fulvia (Val. Max. 3.5.3). Though again the author is not writing to comment on the relationship of Clodius and Fulvia, it is clear even in this denunciation that husband and wife were very close. While this closeness can be seen through the male Roman lens as unseemly affection leading to female control, it also shows that, if nothing else, Fulvia had the ear of her husband and that he valued her company.<sup>73</sup> If Fulvia reciprocated the affection shown by her husband, then it is not surprising that Fulvia grieved openly at his violent death. And in the grips of this grief, Fulvia whipped the city of Rome into a frenzy.

After his murder Clodius' body had been left in the road, shown no respect by his killer (Cic. *Mil.* 33; Asc. *Mil.* 32C). A passer-by, the senator Sex. Tediui, lifted Clodius' body into his litter and returned the corpse to Rome. Clodius' body was displayed in the front of his home amid many mourners. Fulvia presented his wounds for all to see, lamenting uncontrollably (Asc. *Mil.* 32C). Fulvia's lamentations, combined with the oratorical efforts of Rufus and Titus Munatius Plancus, incited the already emotional crowd even further into anger. Led by the plebeian tribunes, this incensed mob carried Clodius' corpse from his home to the Senate house. They laid the slain Clodius upon the rostra and a few eager mob members used the benches and chairs in the Senate house to

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<sup>73</sup> Babcock 1965, 31-32 acknowledges that of her three husbands, it is the most difficult to see Fulvia behind the political program of Clodius.

create a makeshift pyre. The ensuing blaze burned the Senate house to the ground (Asc. *Mil.* 33C; App. *B. Civ.* 2.21; Cic. *Mil.* 61, 90; Dio 40.49; Liv. *Per.* 107).

Here again Fulvia is shown to be a dutiful Roman wife. Her husband was murdered and his body was neglected; Fulvia, as his wife, had every right to be distraught. She mourned within the confines of their shared home and though her lamentation certainly played a role in inciting the mob to action, Fulvia did not accompany Clodius' body to the Senate house. Perhaps she performed all these tasks with an eye for dramatic flourish and an understanding of Roman politics, but none of her actions were out of line with acceptable female behavior.<sup>74</sup> When Milo was taken to court over the murder of Clodius, Fulvia and her mother Sempronia both gave evidence in court, greatly moving those present (Asc. *Mil.* 40C). Women appearing in court was not at all unusual in Roman trials.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, it appears that Fulvia's grief helped sway the court and Milo was convicted, despite Cicero's defense. Fulvia was now an avenged widow with a young daughter, Clodia, and son, P. Clodius Pulcher.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Brennan 2012, 357 describes Fulvia as "stage-managing" Clodius' funeral, and postulates that Agrippina the Elder drew upon her knowledge of Fulvia's success when she publicly mourned her husband Germanicus by carrying his ashes into Rome.

<sup>75</sup> Dixon 1983, 101 and Delia 1991, 199. I believe Delia goes to far, while attempting to correct Babcock, by suggesting that Fulvia was merely grieving with no eye on political machinations. Even if her aim was as simple as revenge, it is unlikely Fulvia did not understand the political implications of her public displays of grief. Delia's choice to dismiss all of the Ciceronian evidence in the *Philippics* and *pro Milone* as biased weaken her argument significantly.

<sup>76</sup> For P. Clodius Pulcher see *MMR II*, 425 and *PIR II(2)*, 240, no. 987; for Clodia, who would go on to be briefly married to Octavian, see *PIR II(2)*, 257, no. 1057.

Fulvia married Gaius Scribonius Curio (hereafter Curio) at some point between the years of 51 and 49 (Cic. *Phil.* 2.11). It is easy to see why Curio would have been interested in Fulvia as a bride. She brought with her the ability to bear children, wealth, and political capital in her position as widow of Clodius. With a son too young to assume his deceased father's *clientela*, Fulvia's new husband would assume their patronage and thus benefit from their inherited influence.<sup>77</sup> Their marriage was cut abruptly short by Curio's death in 49, but it was long enough to produce a child. Unfortunately, there are few specific details known about their marriage.

It should be kept in mind that Curio and, by extension, Fulvia, were aligned with Julius Caesar, during the same time that Octavia's husband Gaius Marcellus was stridently opposing Octavia's great-uncle. The role of Curio and Gaius Marcellus in the outbreak of the civil war between Pompey and Julius Caesar, described above,<sup>78</sup> meant that Fulvia and Octavia certainly knew of one another by now, in the unlikely event they had not before.

During his tribunate, Curio proved to be the spark which kindled the civil war between Pompey and Julius Caesar (Vell. Pat. 2.48.3).<sup>79</sup> Admittedly, as was noted above,

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<sup>77</sup> Welch 1995, 186-188. See Deniaux 2006, 401-420 for an overview of the patron/client system during the Roman Republic.

<sup>78</sup> See pg. 31-33 above for Curio and Gaius Marcellus' roles in the outbreak of the civil war between Pompey and Julius Caesar.

<sup>79</sup> Gruen 1974, 471-490 cautions against assuming the foreordained nature of the civil war and rather looks at the actions and reports of Curio's personality to discuss the role he played during his tribunate in 50.

Gaius Marcellus' appeal to Pompey also assisted in fanning the flames.<sup>80</sup> Fulvia is not mentioned in connection with any of Curio's decisions, and there are no descriptions pertaining directly to the relationship between husband and wife.<sup>81</sup> Cicero, the only source which mentions Curio's marriage to Fulvia, writes years after the marriage and speaks of their marriage only to defame Fulvia and pseudo-threaten Antony by noting that Fulvia's previous husbands have both met violent deaths (Cic. *Phil.* 2.11).

Immediately following his tribunate in 50, Curio left Rome and went to join Julius Caesar (Dio 40.66.5). Curio saw some success in Italy as a military leader under Julius Caesar (Caes. *B. Civ.* 1.12). From Italy, Curio went as *pro praetore* to Sicily, which he occupied for a time. He then sailed to Africa to assist Julius Caesar in his fight against Pompey. It was in Africa, fighting King Juba I of the Numidians, that Curio was slain. Though initially successful near the town of Utica, Curio was trapped by Juba I's forces and slain (Caes. *B. Civ.* 2.23-44). Thus in 49, Fulvia was again made a widow. She now had three young children, though it is unclear if Fulvia delivered her son by Curio before or after he died.<sup>82</sup> There were no dramatic gestures surrounding Curio's death and Fulvia

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<sup>80</sup> Gruen 1966, 120-130 examines the possibility that Curio acted more independently than my earlier discussion of the Gaius Marcellus/Curio senatorial showdown alluded to. See also Gruen 1974, 473-474, 477-478, 481. Many describe Curio as a puppet of Julius Caesar alleging that Curio received a large bribe in 50 and became only a tool to be used by Julius Caesar. Yet, as Gruen and Lacey 1961, 318 note, the contemporary evidence for Curio does not support the claim of a bribe made into a tradition by later historians.

<sup>81</sup> Lacey 1961, 318-329 notes that Curio's career gained new vigor in 50; Babcock 1974, 9, 28-31 notes that Curio was politically active in 50; and Welch 1995, 188-189 suggests that the increase in Curio's influence coincides with his marriage to Fulvia and should in some way be attributed to the influence that Fulvia brought to their marriage.

<sup>82</sup> See previous n. 76 on children with Clodius; her son with Curio, like-named Curio, was killed by Octavian after Actium as a follower of Antony (Dio 51.2.5-6).

drops out of the historical record from the time of Curio's death in 49 to the time of her next marriage in 47/46. With her father dead, and no male relations, Fulvia was on her own to arrange her next marriage. As the mother of young children, she likely dedicated herself to their rearing while overseeing her household and estate, tasks which would have included taking care of Curio's estate and continuing to cultivate both Clodius' and Curio's *clientela* as neither of her sons would have been old enough to take over their fathers' legacies.

It should be noted that during these years of marriage to Clodius and Curio, Fulvia would have been a visible, public representation example of an ideal Republican woman. Additionally, at this point, all of her behavior fell in line with acceptable norms for Roman women. Fulvia's actions up until 44, dramatic as they may have been, did not transgress against expected ideals of a devoted wife. Most classical historians who discussed Fulvia wrote after both Ciceronian and Augustan propagandas had made her name synonymous with transgression.<sup>83</sup> Cicero, the only source contemporary to Fulvia, does not mention her with negative connotation until his scathing denunciations of Antony in his *Philippics*, speeches which are a master class in the rhetoric of character assassination.<sup>84</sup> Also important to note is that while Octavia is not present in the

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<sup>83</sup> It is interesting to consider that Asconius, the chronologically closest source to Fulvia after Cicero, writes of Fulvia without prejudice, in his *Commentary on Cicero's pro Milone* (Asc. *Mil.* 32C, 40C).

<sup>84</sup> Cicero only briefly references Fulvia without naming her in *pro Milone*, despite the fact that she gave evidence for the opposing side (Cic. *Mil.* 28). Fulvia is referenced in two letters of Cicero to Atticus. In the first letter, in April of 44, Cicero complains of her involvement in the case of Deiotarus, a Galatian tetrarch (Cic. *Att.* 366/14.12). While it seems clear from the tone that Cicero is not pleased with her involvement, it does not



historical record of these years, she would have been physically present in Rome to witness these public displays of wifely devotion by Fulvia.

There is no firm date in regards to the timing of Fulvia's next marriage to Antony.<sup>85</sup> Cicero attests that Antony did not divorce his wife, Antonia, until after a new marriage prospect, Fulvia, had been offered (Cic. *Phil.* 2.99). Cicero and Plutarch both note that Antony used the suspicion of adultery between his wife and Dolabella as a justification for divorce (Cic. *Phil.* 2.99; Plut. *Ant.* 9).<sup>86</sup> So it appears that Antony and Fulvia were wed in 47, soon after his divorce. Fulvia, widowed twice, was still an attractive marriage prospect. She remained young enough to bear children, as evidenced

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seem the displeasure stems from Fulvia stepping outside acceptable female behavior, but rather a general distaste for her personality. In the second, written in November of 44, Cicero makes a cryptic joke at Fulvia's expense (Cic. *Att.* 389/16.11). Frank 1920, 275 and Shackleton Bailey 1967, 299-300 n.10 discuss the general import of this joke, but for this paper, the relevant part is that Cicero's joke is based around Fulvia's three husbands. Interestingly, neither of these references in letters to Atticus are particularly vitriolic, suggesting Cicero's cruelty toward Fulvia in the *Philippics* is more rhetoric than reality. Cicero might have been annoyed by Fulvia for a variety of political reasons, but her behavior was not particularly transgressive until it fit with his rhetorical agenda to make it so. Consequently, the orator's attitude toward Fulvia is decidedly hostile in the *Philippics*. The first *Philippic* was delivered in September of 44, the second *Philippic* was published in November, and the third and fourth *Philippic* were delivered in December. *Philippics* five through twelve were delivered between January and April of 43.

<sup>85</sup> Though this paper will follow Antony's life through his marriages to Fulvia and Octavia, it will not attempt a detailed biography. For further reading, see Huzar 1978 which is the most recent scholarly biography to focus on Antony. There are a greater number of popular biographies of Antony, such as Roberts 1988 and Southern 2012. Additionally, Antony is often paired with Cleopatra for study; see Preston 2009 and Goldworthy 2010. Kelly 2014 presents an interesting study of Antony's place in popular culture.

<sup>86</sup> Babcock 1974, 13-14 n. 26 goes so far as to suggest that Fulvia was perhaps the one who was behind the idea to charge Antonia with adultery.

by her previous two marriages. As she did after the death of Clodius, Fulvia had as a resource the political capital that came from being the widow of Clodius, including his pro-Julius Caesar *clientele*, in addition to her general wealth.<sup>87</sup> Her status as the widow of Curio would also have given her some political capital as he died in the service of Julius Caesar. The mere fact that Fulvia continued to marry *populares*, followers of Julius Caesar, cannot be a coincidence. One wonders if Fulvia's closeness with Julius Caesar's cause played a part in Antony's choice. If Plutarch is to be believed, Antony had incurred Julius Caesar's displeasure in 47 because of Antony's behavior as Master of the Horse while Julius Caesar was on campaign and away from Rome (Plut. *Ant.* 10.1-3). Perhaps Antony's marriage and subsequent devotion to Fulvia should be seen as Antony attempting to repair a strained political friendship.<sup>88</sup>

The union of Fulvia and Antony was mutually advantageous. In Fulvia, Antony now had an elite, noble wife who was skilled in overseeing the domestic affairs of a politically active man, as well as having proven her fertility three times over. In Antony, Fulvia now had a husband who was favored with political appointments by the current leading man of Rome. Yet history indicates that Antony would receive the better bargain: Fulvia gained her notorious reputation during the years she was married to Antony and though she was unfailingly loyal, her husband was not.

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<sup>87</sup> Welch 1995, 192.

<sup>88</sup> Welch 1995, 192 n. 93 suggests that Plutarch is correct to credit Antony's reinstatement to Julius Caesar's good graces to Fulvia, but not because Antony became more virtuous because of Fulvia; rather because Antony and Fulvia, when working together, made a formidable political team.

As previously noted, in 47 Antony served as Master of the Horse in Rome for Julius Caesar while he was away fighting the Alexandrian War and returning Cleopatra to her throne.<sup>89</sup> The next year, 46, Antony held no official offices, a fact which appears to support Plutarch's claim of a falling out between Antony and Julius Caesar. Yet in 45, Antony returned again to the forefront of the political scene with his appointment to be co-consul with Julius Caesar. In the same year, Julius Caesar was made dictator for life. The next year Antony was again appointed consul with Julius Caesar, before the latter's death in 44. Dolabella, whom Antony had accused of adultery with his wife Antonia, was appointed co-consul with Antony following the Ides of March.<sup>90</sup>

During these years there is little to be gleaned from the written record about Fulvia.<sup>91</sup> She does not appear directly involved with any of Antony's decisions in a way which drew the attention or ire of historians, meaning she was likely conforming to the accepted ideals associated with being a supportive consul's wife. She certainly was delivered of a son, Marcus Antonius Antyllus (hereafter Antyllus) sometime between 47 and 44.<sup>92</sup> Though Antony had been married before, the limited information about his

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<sup>89</sup> Welch 1995, 182-201 examines the political intricacies of 47 in detail.

<sup>90</sup> For an overview of the years 46-44, see Syme 1939, 47-96; Huzar 1978, 63-80; Rawson 1994a; Mackay 2009, 297-324.

<sup>91</sup> Welch 1995, 192-193 sees Fulvia indirectly behind many of Antony's policy choices.

<sup>92</sup> In the *Philippics*, Cicero mentions that Antony's young son was used as a hostage in 44 indicating Antyllus was likely born near the start of his Fulvia and Antony's marriage. Logistically, Antyllus would need to be at least two to be separated from his mother and used as a hostage (Cic. *Phil.* 1.31, 2.90, 12.1). Plutarch also writes of Antony's use of Antyllus as a hostage (Plut. *Ant.* 15.1).

previous wives and children seem to indicate that Antyllus was his first legitimate male heir.<sup>93</sup>

In the years between 44 and 40, Fulvia's mark on the historical record is much bolder. The last four years of her life would be the years which begat her notorious reputation. Following the murder of Julius Caesar, Antony and Octavian battled, first for the slain dictator's legacy and then, for primacy in Rome.<sup>94</sup> It is not apparent that Fulvia overtly contributed to any of Antony's decisions or actions during this fraught time in 44, immediately following Julius Caesar's death (for instance, the reading of the slain dictator's will).<sup>95</sup> Fulvia certainly assisted Antony in implementing his political plans, as demonstrated by in her involvement in Antony's passage of the *acta Caesaris*.<sup>96</sup>

Additionally, it seems perhaps Antony learned from his wife's example. Antony treated

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<sup>93</sup> Babcock 1965, 13 n. 25.

<sup>94</sup> For an overview of the events in 44-40, see Syme 1939, 97-258; Huzar 1978, 81-168; Rawson 1994a; Osgood 2006, 12-201; Mackay 2009, 315-341.

<sup>95</sup> For the events of 44, see Syme 1939, 97-122; Huzar 1978, 81-102; Rawson 1994b; Osgood 2006, 12-39; Mackay 2009; 315-324.

<sup>96</sup> Babcock 1965, 23 speculates that Cicero's mention of Fulvia in the fifth Philippic is indicative of Fulvia's inappropriate involvement behind the scenes when Antony was passing the *acta Caesaris*, those acts of Julius Caesar which were agreed upon before his death (Cic. *Phil.* 5.11). [See Bauman 1985, 54-56 for a discussion of Deiotarus' trial and subsequent restoration, the *acta Caesaris* which Cicero believes to be the work of Fulvia.] Yet when Cicero wrote to Atticus of this matter, his tone was much less hostile toward Fulvia's involvement (Cic. *Att.* 366/14.12). This is in line with Cicero's general regard for the informal power of women as acceptable, as seen in his attitude toward Terentia and Servilla. In the *Philippics*, Cicero turns this informal female power wielded by Fulvia into something transgressive in an attempt to discredit Antony. Bauman 1992, 84 describes the attack by Cicero in the *Philippics* "scathing" and while I do not disagree, I believe the lack of vitriol in the letter to Atticus indicates that Cicero's personal understanding of informal female power was somewhat at odds with his public critique of Fulvia.

Julius Caesar's corpse in a way strikingly similar to Fulvia's actions following the murder of Clodius. Antony took the body of Julius Caesar, still in his blood-stained toga, into the Forum and displayed his wounds for all to see. This presentation, along with a fiery speech, incited and enraged the crowd to search immediately for Julius Caesar's murderers. The throng sought to take the dictator's body and burn it, but there was a fear that other parts of the city would burn. So instead, a pyre was made in the Forum (Dio 44.35.1-44.50.1; Plut. *Ant.* 15.3-4). One wonders if the fear was prompted by the memory of the fire which burned Clodius' body and the Senate house with it.<sup>97</sup>

Though at first it was Antony who controlled Rome after the death of Julius Caesar, Octavian's arrival and acceptance of his inheritance as Julius Caesar's adopted son changed the game. Soon Antony was losing the support of the Roman people and Octavian was able to capitalize on this by attracting allies, like Cicero, who were ready to see Antony out of power. In October and November of 44, Antony went to Brundisium to take command of his troops for the next year. Octavian saw this as an opportunity to strike a blow at his rival by attempting to bribe Antony's troops away from him. Octavian's bid worked, and half of Antony's troops defected to Octavian. In an attempt to regain control of his men, Antony offered a counter bribe. His troops resisted, not swayed by the amount Antony was proposing. In anger, Antony sought to punish them.

It was here, at Brundisium in 44, that it appears Fulvia began to venture outside acceptable female behavior. In order to settle the unrest, Antony selected a number of his

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<sup>97</sup> Babcock 1965, 21 n. 34 I agree with Babcock's suggestion that "Antony's own performance before the body of Caesar" could (and to my mind, should) be seen as a product of Fulvia's influence.

dissenting centurions and had them killed (App. *B. Civ.* 3.43; Dio 45.13; Cic. *Phil.* 3.4, 3.10, 4.4, 5.22, 13.18; Livy *Ep.* 117). The soldiers were killed in front of Antony and Fulvia (Dio 45.12; Cic. *Phil.* 3.4, 5.22, 13.18).<sup>98</sup> Decimation, the killing of one in every ten soldiers, as a punishment for disobedient troops was not uncommon.<sup>99</sup> The presence of Fulvia during this punishment of Antony's troops, on the other hand, was unprecedented. Women were not traditionally included in military matters, and especially during such a violent incident.<sup>100</sup> Again, it is Cicero and Cassius Dio who supply us with the most damning evidence on Fulvia's behavior. It is unlikely in this case that Cicero, and subsequently Cassius Dio, are imagining this behavior. Cicero's *Phillipics*, though invective, needed to be based in a believable reality. Perhaps the blood did not physically splash onto Fulvia's face as Cicero claims (Cic. *Phil.* 3.4), but it is likely she was present at the camp when the decimation took place.

In December of 44, Antony decided to leave with his army and march toward Cisalpine Gaul after pushing through quasi-legal reappointments of the provinces. Though Antony had been assigned Macedonia, Antony's new legislation reassigned him

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<sup>98</sup> Bauman 1992, 84.

<sup>99</sup> See Keaveney 2007 and Erdkamp 2008 for the Roman army during the late Republic.

<sup>100</sup> Later, a few imperial women would find socially acceptable ways to have a relationship with Roman armies. Dixon 1988, 82 and 100 n.15, discusses the title "mother of the camp" which was given to Julia Domna and though the Senate attempted to give the title earlier to Livia, Tiberius did not approve the title's official usage; Bauman 1992, 138-143, describes Agrippina the Elder, wife of Germanicus (the son of Antonia Minor and grandson of Octavia), and her interactions with the armies of her husband. Agrippina was not demonized for her actions in the way Fulvia would be for hers; Levick 2014, 78-79, discusses Faustina II receiving the title "mother of the camps" and Agrippina the Elder's role in Germanicus' campaign.

to Cisalpine Gaul. When Antony arrived in Mutina, he found that Decimus Brutus, the current governor of the province, was unwilling to relinquish his post. Not to be dissuaded, Antony laid siege to the city. Cicero saw this action as an opportunity to remove the troublesome Antony. Enlisting the assistance of Hirtius and Pansa, the consuls of 43, and Octavian, Cicero attempted to have official action taken against Antony and have him declared an enemy of the state, but the divided Senate voted only to send an embassy to Antony. This embassy, discussed earlier, included Philippus.<sup>101</sup> Antony refused the terms and sent the embassy back to the Senate with demands of his own, which were roundly rejected. Throughout the early months of 43, Antony battled with the armies of Pansa, Hirtius, and Octavian. Although Antony lost, fleeing with his battered troops, both the consuls, Pansa and Hirtius were killed, leaving Octavian the sole surviving leader. After Antony's defeat, he and his followers were formally named as enemies of the state.<sup>102</sup>

While Antony fought these military battles near Mutina, Fulvia fought her husband's political battles in Rome. After Antony had begun the siege and Cicero began to make political moves against him, Fulvia stepped in to sway the Senate against declaring her husband *hostis*, an enemy of the state. The night before the vote was to be taken in the first attempt to have Antony declared *hostis*, Fulvia, with her son Antyllus and Antony's mother Julia, went around Rome all night beseeching the influential men in the city to prevent the motion against her husband. During the morning of the vote,

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<sup>101</sup> See pg. 21 in the earlier discussion of Philippus for these negotiations.

<sup>102</sup> See Syme 1939, 162-175; Huzar 1978, 102-110; Osgood 2006, 50-61; Mackay 2009; 320-330 for further discussion on the events surrounding the battles at Mutina.

Fulvia and Julia continued their attempt to assist Antony in avoiding a *hostis* declaration. Wearing mourning clothes and falling at the feet of senators as they made their way to the Senate house, the women wailed and lamented. This spectacle was so successful that Cicero felt the need to address the Senate to regain the upper hand (App. *B. Civ.* 3.51).<sup>103</sup>

Akin to her public display of grief at the death of Clodius, Fulvia's strategy to sway the senators was traditional, and brilliantly employed.<sup>104</sup> This public demonstration on Antony's behalf did not go against acceptable norms of female behavior, since it was not uncommon for the relatives of a condemned man to parade as mourners in an attempt to elicit sympathy for their doomed relation. In this case, Antony had not been condemned yet and Fulvia's use of traditional mourning saliently reminded senators that declaring Antony a *hostis* went against both law and custom; Antony was not being given the right to be heard in his own defense. Interestingly, Fulvia's great-grandfather wrote on public law and this particular constitutional conundrum, of condemning a man who was not allowed to defend himself, had been a topic of debate even then.<sup>105</sup> Ultimately, as noted above, Fulvia only delayed the declaration of *hostis* against her husband. Yet this

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<sup>103</sup> Treggiari 2007, 56-57 notes that Cicero himself used a similar ploy to attempt to elicit sympathy when Clodius sought to punish the orator after Clodius regained power following the Bona Dea scandal.

<sup>104</sup> Babcock 1965, 21 suggests that Fulvia's actions after the death of Clodius "foreshadow" her actions on Antony's behalf during the siege of Mutina. To my mind, it is not foreshadowing as that implies a teleological interpretation of her life. I believe Fulvia was well aware of how successful her public performance of grief for Clodius had been. Her performance of mourning during the events at Mutina imply that she understood the informal power a woman could wield. Fulvia learned a valuable lesson after the death of Clodius and she applied that knowledge and experience during Mutina.

<sup>105</sup> See Babcock 1965, 20 and Bauman 1992, 85-86 for Fulvia's actions during the siege of Mutina; see Bauman 1973, 270-93 on the lingering constitutional question of *hostis*.



*hostis* episode shows that, although her presence at Brundisium exposed Fulvia as willing to take steps outside traditional expectations, she was equally willing to continue working within the established and informal channels of power available to elite Roman women.

After Antony was declared *hostis*, his many enemies in the city of Rome attempted to take advantage of his absence to harass the both the *clientela* of Antony, and Fulvia herself. Antony's enemies persecuted his friends and attempted to rob Fulvia of her possessions; these enemies even went so far as to threaten Antony's children (Nep. *Att.* 9.2). During this time of tribulation for Fulvia, she was assisted by Atticus, the close friend and correspondent of Cicero. Though Nepos is perhaps overly flattering to Atticus' character,<sup>106</sup> it appears Atticus assisted Fulvia both in court and out. When Fulvia went to court, Atticus was by her side and when she desperately needed money, Atticus gave her a loan with no interest and no contract (Nep. *Att.* 9.3-5). With Antony an enemy of

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<sup>106</sup> Nepos attributes Atticus' actions to his good character, writing that Atticus was a friend to mankind (Nep. *Att.* 9.5). While the flattering sentiment may be true, it is interesting to consider whether there was perhaps a different motive behind Atticus' assistance toward Fulvia. As Nepos notes, there was little reason for a friend of Cicero and Brutus to help Antony, yet Atticus appears to have done just that by assisting Antony's wife Fulvia. To my mind, this suggests that Fulvia herself might have held some degree of power which she, and Atticus, thought she could wield on his behalf. Or, perhaps, Atticus was kindhearted enough to see that Fulvia was being attacked for the political machinations of her husband and with Antony out of Rome, Fulvia had little legal protection. Though Nepos denies the claim (Nep. *Att.* 9.6-7), it is possible Atticus was playing the long game; consider if his bid was to assist Fulvia, rather than Antony. Fulvia had survived the deaths of her two previous husbands, both of whom were political firebrands. Atticus might consider it worthwhile to invest time and effort in such a resilient patroness. Regardless, Atticus did indeed benefit from his investment in Antony's wife – when Antony returned to power soon after, he assisted Atticus by removing his name from the list of proscribed men (Nep. *Att.* 10). Welch 1996 discusses the possible political power Atticus wielded through his position as an influential financier in the late Republic.

the state, Fulvia was forced to bear the weight of public scrutiny during her appearances in court. It is unclear if Fulvia could have survived this time as wife to a *hostis* by meekly accepting the events surrounding her, rather than publicly resisting both in court and outside as she appeared to have done. The sources provide no clear indication of how serious the situation Fulvia found herself in truly was. For instance, how necessary was the loan that Atticus provided for her? Were the funds to cover a basic need, such as care of her household, or was it for something frivolous, like maintaining her elite dignity by continuing to live a lavish lifestyle? If nothing else, she was likely a social pariah whose many casual acquaintances would have faded away while they awaited the outcome of Antony's *hostis* declaration.<sup>107</sup>

After Antony's defeat at Mutina, he recouped his troop losses by meeting with his legate Ventidius, who had recruited three legions for his commander. Antony then slipped away into Gaul where he met Lepidus and Munatius Plancus. Both men, like Antony, were old officers of Julius Caesar; thus, their soldiers were also acquainted with each other as fellows under the command of the slain Julius Caesar. Though Lepidus might have resisted an alliance with Antony, it appears his soldiers did not allow him the option. Octavian was also busy during the months following Mutina.

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<sup>107</sup> Treggiari 2007, 56-70 describes Terentia's actions during Cicero's exile from Rome. Though Terentia's and Fulvia's situations were not exactly the same, Fulvia was attempting a similar task. Like Terentia, Fulvia's husband was a political pariah, and like Terentia, Fulvia did her best to protect her household and family while her husband was outside the city of Rome. It is interesting to note that Atticus appears to have assisted Terentia during Cicero's exile as he later did for Fulvia when Antony was *hostis*.

Though he possessed armies, Octavian had yet to secure any formal political position. His initial diplomatic attempt to petition the Senate for office failed, and he, like his adopted father Julius Caesar before him, crossed the Rubicon and marched on Rome. The Senate soon acquiesced and allowed Octavian to stand for the consulship, though he was twenty years too young for the position. The nineteen year old consul then went north to meet with Lepidus and Antony outside Bononia. This reconciliation in November of 43 would produce the first legal triumvirate, a dictatorship of three, modeled after the informal agreement between Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Crassus years before. Their stated goal was to eliminate Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar, and for that, the triumvirs would need a great amount of money to fund the operation and pay their troops afterwards.<sup>108</sup>

This accord at Bononia was sealed with an arrangement of marriage between Octavian and Antony's stepdaughter, Clodia, Fulvia's daughter by Clodius. This marriage was suggested by the soldiers of Antony (or perhaps by the order of Antony, Dio 46.56.3-4) to Octavian, and though he was betrothed to another, Octavian agreed to the marriage (Plut. *Ant.* 20). Although Fulvia does not appear to have been present at Bononia, the agreement certainly seems to have been, at least in part, her work.<sup>109</sup> An agreement sealed by marriage was a tried and true Roman tradition, and though Fulvia's marriages were not themselves deal-sealers as such, she would have understood this use of Roman marriage and would likely have approved of the political and familial

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<sup>108</sup> See Syme 1939, 176-186; Huzar 1978 111-116; Osgood 2006, 56-61; Mackay 2009, 327-332 for the formation of the triumvirate.

<sup>109</sup> Babcock 1965, 20.

connection to Octavian. Though the sources give the credit of this marriage to the troops, or to the troops via encouragement by Antony, it is interesting to consider the possibility that Fulvia too had a relationship with Antony's soldiers. She was certainly at Brundisium with Antony when he addressed and disciplined his troops there. It is intriguing to speculate about the nature of the loyalty Fulvia inspired in Antony's troops, since a possible connection between Antony's wife and his armies is plausible, though impossible to prove.

The triumvirate chose to imitate their predecessor Sulla, and order a proscription in order to raise funds to achieve their previously stated goal of punishing the murderers of Julius Caesar.<sup>110</sup> A brutal, nasty way of dealing with one's political enemies while also confiscating their wealth, a proscription was by definition simple: a list of names would be posted of the proscribed men, and their killers would be given large sums of money for undertaking this messy homicidal business.<sup>111</sup> The outcome of such a list was far less simple.<sup>112</sup> The proscriptions were a homicidal and frightening time in Rome, and many stories of loyalty and betrayal emerge from its aggressive violence.

During the proscriptions, Antony and Fulvia were portrayed as villains by the classical sources. One of the victims of these proscriptions was, unsurprisingly, Cicero. As an outspoken opponent of Antony and a disposable ally of Octavian, Cicero was

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<sup>110</sup> See Henderson 2003 for an article length examination of the Sullan Proscription.

<sup>111</sup> Osgood 2006, 63 explains both succinctly and dramatically, "The list, once made, would be posted, and the heads of those on it would fetch large rewards. Gangs of armed men, eager for the cash, would take notice – it was a job posting too - and begin, like so many packs of bloodhounds, to scour City and countryside for the proscribed."

<sup>112</sup> For further discussion of the proscriptions, see Syme 1939, 187-201; Huzar 1978, 117-121; Osgood 2006, 62-82.

added to the list of proscribed men. After the orator was slain, his head was brought to Antony. He ordered that Cicero's head be displayed on the rostra and his hands nailed to the podium, so that this gruesome display would be in the very spot where the orator had delivered his invectives against Antony (Plut. *Ant.* 20.2 and *Cic.* 48.4; App. *B. Civ.* 4.20). In retribution for his slanders, Fulvia was said to have taken Cicero's head in her lap, pulled out his tongue and pierced it with one of her hair pins, while abusing his lifeless head with curses and jests (Dio 47.8.1-4). It is difficult to know if Fulvia did indeed take such vicious revenge on Cicero.<sup>113</sup> She certainly had reason to hate the orator: though his *Philippics* never mentioned her by name, the speeches contained many slanders against her. Yet, only Dio's account describes Fulvia's abuse of Cicero's head, somewhat diminishing the strength of his claim.

In another account, Fulvia is accused of abusing the head of different man, the senator Caesetius Rufus. Previously, he had refused to sell his house to Fulvia. As retribution, she had his name added to the list of the proscribed, even after Caesetius Rufus offered his house to her as a free gift. When his head was brought before Antony, the triumvir instructed it be taken to Fulvia instead.<sup>114</sup> She proceeded to have his head displayed in front of the house he had refused to sell her (App. *B. Civ.* 4.29). Here again, there is a discrepancy among historians about the extent of Fulvia's role in the

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<sup>113</sup> Bauman 1992, 85 and 240 n.18, cautions that this accusation not be dismissed out of hand, as "There was a strong tradition for violent expressions of red rage against enemies."

<sup>114</sup> Val. Max. 9.5.4 also discusses this event adding that Antony did not recognize the man. Yet, in Valerius Maximus' account, Fulvia is not mentioned.

proscriptions. Interestingly, the traits of Fulvia most derided by Cicero in his *Philippics*, were *avarita* (Cic. *Phil.* 2.113, 6.4, 13.18) and *crudelitas* (Cic. *Phil.* 3.4, 13.18), avarice and cruelty.<sup>115</sup> It seems that perhaps later historians focused on giving examples of Fulvia which agreed with Cicero's description.<sup>116</sup>

It is particularly tricky to attempt to untangle whether Fulvia did physically abuse these men's heads, or if this cruel behavior is a construction meant to reinforce Fulvia's transgressive actions at Perugia two years later. Fulvia had reason to hate Cicero, and she had reason to be angry with the leading men of Rome. When Antony was declared *hostis*, Fulvia suffered attacks from those men who sought to harm Antony through her. The proscriptions were a bloody time in Rome, where men were killed for being on the wrong political side, or even for something as simple as being wealthy or unlucky. Perhaps Fulvia did take the opportunity to avenge herself on Cicero, who had been a constant thorn in her side, and her husbands, or on Caesetius Rufus, who was emblematic of those who sought to attack her while she was most vulnerable.

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<sup>115</sup> Additionally, Cic. *Phil.* 1.33, 2.93b, 2.95, 3.10, 3.16-17, and 4.4 all allude to Fulvia's qualities of avarice and cruelty without directly mentioning them.

<sup>116</sup> Babcock 1965, 22 also suggests that "Since the best propaganda is the exaggeration of a known or credible element, we must expect to find in Fulvia such tendencies." Though I do not think Babcock entirely wrong, to my mind the tendency of ancient historians toward stereotyping women as either "good" or "bad" muddies the situation considerably. As I have said, it is easy to believe that Fulvia *could* have committed these crimes, she had ample motivation. Yet, her behavior up to this point does not suggest an inherently violent woman. Her presence at Brundisium was, at most, as an observer. Again, I wonder if these classical writers sought to strengthen their later claims about Fulvia's involvement at Perugia by way of this violent behavior during the proscriptions.

Yet, there is a very clear stereotype at work here. Alongside the behavior of Fulvia, and other “bad” women like the wife of Septimus, who used the proscriptions to rid herself of an unwanted husband (App. *B. Civ.* 4.23), there was the behavior of “good” women during the proscriptions. Rather than condemn the men in their lives, these “good” Roman women saved them.<sup>117</sup> One of the men proscribed was Antony’s uncle, Lucius. In an attempt to escape his fate, Lucius fled to the house of his sister, Antony’s mother Julia. Those seeking to kill Lucius forced their way into Julia’s chamber, but she put herself in the doorway and would not allow them to pass. She reminded them that she was the mother of their commander, Antony, and they would have to slay her to get to Lucius (Plut. *Ant.* 20.3). The men relented and Julia went to her son Antony, who was in the forum. She confessed her crime of concealment to Antony and claimed that if Lucius was to die, so would she. Though Antony chided her for being an unreasonable mother, he had his uncle spared (App. *B. Civ.* 4.37).

One of the most famous “good” women of the proscriptions is a woman modern historians refer to as Turia.<sup>118</sup> She appears to have been an incredible woman and all the

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<sup>117</sup> Appian writes of the wife of Ligarius, who concealed her husband. She did so in secret, telling only a female slave. This slave betrayed her trust and Ligarius was killed. His wife followed his head, crying out that she should suffer the same fate, as was the law when a person was caught concealing a proscribed man. She went before the triumvirs and confessed her crime. Moved by her grief, the triumvirs acted as if they could not see her. Ligarius’ wife then starved herself to death. Though Ligarius’ wife would technically be a “good” wife, Appian includes her just before the “bad” wife of Septimus, because the the wife of Ligarius was able to save neither her husband, nor herself (App. *B. Civ.* 4.23).

<sup>118</sup> The so-called Turia will only be discussed briefly here as an example of women’s behavior during the proscriptions. Osgood’s 2014 monograph is an excellent exploration of Turia and the funeral speech, or *laudatio*, by which we know of this woman at all.

more so because her true identity remains unknown to us, the only evidence of her life is an inscription of the funeral speech her husband gave after her death. Turia was no stranger to adversity. During the civil war between Pompey and Julius Caesar in 49, her parents were murdered by a roving band of marauders, much in the same way Clodius was slain by Milo and his gang.<sup>119</sup> Afterwards, with the help of only her sister, Turia avenged her parents' deaths.<sup>120</sup> This would not be the last time Turia would act with distinction in the service of her family. When the triumvirs posted the list of proscribed men, Turia's husband's name was included. In the face of this potentially deadly situation, Turia was the calm voice of reason. She persuaded her husband to go into hiding with the assistance of her sister and her sister's husband. Further, she went to Octavian at Brundisium, after the battle of Philippi, and secured an edict of restoration from him for her husband. Yet her tribulations were not yet over. Once back in Rome she needed to also secure Lepidus' consent before her husband was truly safe. Turia chose a public tribunal to make her case to Lepidus who initially proved hostile to her request. Turia's husband described physical abuse and the resultant bruises she endured at the hands of Lepidus. She persisted, reminding Lepidus of Octavian's edict until eventually he relented.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Osgood 2014, 13.

<sup>120</sup> Osgood 2014, 17-18 discusses the violence of revenge in the late Roman Republic. Though certainly not the same sort of revenge that Fulvia enacted when she abused Cicero's head, the normalization of violent revenge lends perspective to her possible actions.

<sup>121</sup> Osgood 2014 52-56.



Turia's actions then, can be compared with those of Julia, Antony's mother. Both of these women used the public tribunal as a way to force the hand of the triumvirs. Though Antony and Lepidus would have preferred to ignore these women, Turia's and Julia's use of the public tribunal would not allow it. Turia exposed Lepidus' abuse to the public and he relented rather than continue and force the issue. Julia did the same when she went to her son in public. Perhaps in private he could have denied her request, but he could not deny her in the public tribunal. Though Fulvia's use of the public was earlier - her public grief at Clodius' death and her public efforts concerning Antony's *hostis* declaration - it becomes clear that women, though denied the use of public office, could certainly use civil disobedience in public as a tool when official channels of power attempted to deny them gratification.<sup>122</sup>

Another example of the behavior of a "good" woman during the proscriptions was Octavia. In this instance, she is put in almost direct comparison with Fulvia. A woman named Tanusia hid her proscribed husband Titus Vinius in a chest stored at the house of a freedman, Philopoemen. During a festival directed by one of Tanusia's relatives, she enlisted the aid of Octavia. Sometime during the festival, Octavia made sure that Octavian entered the theater alone. When Tanusia saw this, she rushed out and confessed her deed, producing her husband out of the chest. Astonished, Octavian released all of the participants. The freedman Philopoemen was enrolled among the knights for his loyalty

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<sup>122</sup> Osgood 2014, 57-60.

(Dio 47.7.4-5).<sup>123</sup> Thus, Octavia was shown to be a “good” woman, a sympathetic ear to which Romans might appeal in an effort to seek leniency from her brother the triumvir, whereas Fulvia was shown to be a “bad” woman, a cruel partner to an unreasonable triumvir.

The later Augustan propaganda can clearly be detected in these stories, attempting to shift any blame for the brutal proscriptions from Octavian to Antony. The use of the women closest to these triumvirs, Octavia and Fulvia, must be seen, at least in part, as an extension of this propaganda move. Yet, it does not seem prudent to entirely discount the possibility that these two women indeed acted this way. Fulvia appears to have been a woman devoted to the political aims of her husband, so it seems likely she would have supported his treatment of Cicero and perhaps participated in the mistreatment of his head. Similarly, Octavia appears to have been a woman willing and capable of negotiating between adversarial parties, so it seems likely she would have assisted those interested in seeking clemency from Octavian.<sup>124</sup>

The proscriptions, though brutally effective, did not fully raise the amount of money the triumvirs felt they needed for their campaign against Julius Caesar’s murderers. In 42, to raise additional funds, the Second Triumvirate levied a tax which would affect the 1400 wealthiest women in Rome. These women were required to make a

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<sup>123</sup> Both App. *B. Civ.* 4.44 and Suet. *Aug.* 27.2 also relate this story of Philopoemen being rewarded with a knighthood for protecting his patron, but neither discuss the details of the incident nor the involvement of Tanusia or Octavia.

<sup>124</sup> As Hemelrijk 2004b, 190 succinctly writes, “Such stories, in which women are presented as stereotypes of good, or evil, wives, are not to be taken for reliable historical accounts. Yet, neither should they be dismissed as entirely fictitious.”

valuation of their property and give a portion to the war effort. If these wealthy women resisted or lied about the value of their property, they would face a fine. The triumvirs even offered a reward for anyone who provided evidence of tax dodging by these women. In an effort to stop the triumvirs, the wealthy women went to beseech the female relatives of Antony and Octavian. Although Octavia and Antony's mother Julia were sympathetic to the plight of their fellow wealthy women, Fulvia's rudeness repulsed them (*App. B. Civ.* 4.32).

The women were not to be silenced or deterred and went to confront the triumvirs at their tribunal. They chose Hortensia, the daughter of a famous orator, to act as their spokeswoman and she gave an impressive speech in which she chided the triumvirs for their actions.<sup>125</sup> In anger, the triumvirs ordered the lictors to drive the women away from the tribunal by force. This act of aggression against the women upset the crowd outside and the lictors desisted, telling the assembled mass that a decision would be made on the next day. The triumvirs backed down and reduced the number of women to 400, while at the same time adding a number of men who were also required to contribute money toward the war effort (*App. B. Civ.* 4.32-34). The eloquence of Hortensia was admired by classical writers (*Val. Max.* 8.3.3; *Quint. Inst.* 1.1.6).

Again, Fulvia, serving as a bad example, was vilified in comparison to proper Roman matrons such as Octavia and Julia. Rather than attempt to assist her fellow Roman matrons and take the role of negotiator or peacemaker with her husband Antony,

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<sup>125</sup> See Bauman 1992, 81-83; Osgood 2006, 82-88; Welch 2010, 312-314; Hopwood 2015 for more on Hortensia's speech.

Fulvia rebuffed the women. This choice of Fulvia's, to support her husband to the detriment of her fellow matrons, distanced Fulvia from the expected female norm in this sort of situation. There appears to be an unspoken presumption among Roman women that female to female appeals should be received and respected no matter the politics between their husbands.<sup>126</sup> Fulvia spurned this expectation and rudely rebuffed her fellow matrons. This rejection strengthens her place among the "bad" women in the triumviral proscriptions; those who were "good" saved their relations from the proscriptions, while the "bad" women aided the triumvirs. Unlike Fulvia, Julia and Octavia, despite both women having strong familial connections to the triumvirs, managed to retain their "good" reputations by assisting the proscribed and assisting their fellow matrons across political divides. The "goodness" of Julia and Octavia was evident in their attempts to assist the victims of the proscriptions, even though their son and brother, respectively, were the ones responsible for the proscriptions.<sup>127</sup> Fulvia, on the other hand, was continually labeled "bad" for supporting her husband Antony by refusing to hear the pleas of her fellow matrons. The fine distinction between "good" and "bad" was complicated by the complexities of female *pietas*. In this situation Fulvia chose loyalty to her husband over loyalty to her fellow matrons, a decision which removed her from proper female behavior.

Fulvia's scorn was enough for these wealthy women to believe their case could not be helped by Octavia and Julia alone.<sup>128</sup> It should be remembered that at this point

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<sup>126</sup> Welch 2010, 313.

<sup>127</sup> Welch 2010, 317.

<sup>128</sup> Bauman 1992, 86 notes that it was Fulvia who spoke for Antony, not Julia.

Octavian was engaged, if not already married, to Fulvia's daughter Clodia. This connection, in addition to her position as the wife of Antony, meant that her influence was likely felt more strongly than Octavia's, connected only to her brother Octavian, or Julia's, connected only to her son Antony. Fulvia's loyalty to Antony's political plans should also be remembered and paired with her strong influence when attempting to understand her treatment of these women.<sup>129</sup> Hortensia and the women she spoke for realized that without Fulvia's support, their appeal to the triumvirs through their female kin would not be heard. Thus, they marched on the triumvirs and Hortensia laid out their collective grievances before the leading men of Rome. It appears that only a public appeal to the triumvirs was powerful enough to override Fulvia's dismissal.

The appropriate money now raised, the triumvirs went on to wage war against Brutus and Cassius as the leaders of Julius Caesar's assassination. The Republicans and the Caesarians met for the last time at the Battle of Philippi. In the aftermath of the battle, Antony was given the larger portion of credit for the victory over the Republicans. Though Octavian was present at the final battle, he was ill and did not participate in combat. With the murderers of Julius Caesar now slain, the triumvirs moved on to dividing up the responsibilities of governing the Roman world. Octavian would take Italy

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<sup>129</sup> Babcock 1965, 23-24 writes that Fulvia is portrayed as a monarchist, "one addicted to the concept of individual power" during the triumviral period. He is supported by Appian who has Lucius Antony name her as such when he speaks to Octavian (*App. B. Civ.* 5.54). Fulvia's devotion to Antony's agenda does appear to resemble a dutiful queen supporting her king. And her haughty behavior in dismissing the wealthy women of Rome also has a strong flavor of queenship; the sense of being above her peers rather than one with her Republican compatriots. See also n. 148.

to deal with the settlement of the Caesarian war veterans, Antony would take up the governance of the eastern provinces, and Lepidus would be treated as a nonentity and given control of Africa, a command which could be revoked if his sympathies strayed from Antony and Octavian. The triumvirs then turned their attention to the business of governing, leaving for their respective assignments.<sup>130</sup>

The matter of the settlement of war veterans would precipitate Fulvia's greatest and final hour. She, along with all of Italy, watched as Octavian returned to Italy and confiscated prime land on which he planned to settle the returning veterans as landowners.<sup>131</sup> Though at first she remained silent in the face of Octavian's actions (Dio 48.5.1), Fulvia quickly realized that Octavian's resettlement of the veterans had the potential to steal Antony's portion of the credit for paying their soldiers. Along with Lucius Antony and Manius, a proconsul of Antony's, Fulvia attempted to delay the resettlement until Antony could return to Italy, so that he, along with Octavian, would be given credit for fulfilling their payment to their soldiers. Octavian continued to move ahead with the resettlements, despite Fulvia and Lucius Antony's attempts to stop him or, at the very least, have governors loyal to Antony in charge of the colony settlements of Antony's soldiers. As a final attempt to gain favorable terms from Octavian, Fulvia took the issue to the public. With her children by her side, Fulvia appeared before the

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<sup>130</sup> For the battle of Philippi and subsequent political arrangements after see Syme 1939, 202-207; Huzar 1978, 117-131; Osgood 2006, 88-107; Mackay 2009, 332-337.

<sup>131</sup> This paper will only discuss these land confiscations and reallocations as they pertain to Fulvia and serve as the cause for the Perusine War. See Syme 1939, 208-213; Gabba 1971; Bauman 1985, 92-103; Osgood 2006, 108-151 for further discussion of the Perusine War.

returning soldiers and beseeched them to remember Antony's kindnesses and the glory he won for them. Octavian, fearing that the popularity of Antony would cause problems during the resettlement, softened his stance and allowed that friends of Antony be put in charge of the colonies of Antony's returning legions (App. *B. Civ.* 5.14).

Here, Fulvia is again shown to be successful in her employment of indirect female power through public appeal. Although, again, she takes a small step outside of the traditional norms by making this public plea to the military. Yet, for Fulvia, this cannot be seen as unexpected. Recalling Brundisium, Fulvia was clearly not uncomfortable in the presence of her husband's soldiers. This time, she brought her children to remind the soldiers of her connection to Antony, and as a reaffirmation of her womanhood. It was a clever move on Fulvia's part, to remind the soldiers of her female value whilst toeing the line of appropriate female behavior.

The classical sources give the impression that Fulvia wielded significant power in Rome at this time. As just discussed, Appian has Octavian changing his resettlement plans after her indirect power-play, and Dio goes so far as to suggest that while the official consuls of 41 were Lucius Antony and Publius Servilius, in fact it was Fulvia and Lucius Antony (Dio 48.4.1). Though perhaps Dio exaggerates the scope of her power as part of his overall purpose of demonizing Fulvia, it is entirely possible that she did hold quite a large share of the power in Rome. Consider that she was the wife of one triumvir, and the mother-in-law of another. When Antony was out of Rome, she was the main point of contact in their household when it came to the Antonine *clientela*. Though Lucius Antony was also present in the city and the two would certainly work together,

Fulvia, as wife to the patriarch of the Antonine family, would likely hold an at least equivalent share of the power in their relationship.

After her antics in front of the veterans, Octavian moved quickly to sever his ties of marriage with Fulvia as he could no longer abide her “difficult temper,” though, in fact, it was likely her success which bothered him. He divorced her daughter Clodia, which in itself was not unusual, but he went so far as to swear an oath that he was returning Clodia to her mother a virgin. This unnecessary admission by Octavian was rude, because it left open speculation as to why Clodia had abided in his house for so long while remaining a virgin (Dio 48.5.3; Suet. *Aug.* 62.1).<sup>132</sup> Though this move certainly curtailed the influence Fulvia could exert over Octavian through her daughter Clodia, it did not mean that Fulvia’s influence was significantly diminished otherwise. The loss of connection by marriage did, however, mean there would be less to prevent outright hostility between Octavian and Antonine allies, such as Fulvia and Lucius Antony.

It appears that despite their alliance, Lucius Antony and Fulvia bickered, perhaps over how best to proceed concerning the confiscated lands and the proposed resettlements. While initially Lucius Antony, like Fulvia, supported the veterans who needed to be resettled, he switched allegiances and began to show support for those whose lands had been confiscated (*App. B. Civ.* 5.19; *Vel Pat.* 2.74.2). As a show of her displeasure with him, or perhaps as a display of her power, she initially blocked a

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<sup>132</sup> Suetonius’ account is brief, noting only that Octavian divorced Clodia because of a falling out with Fulvia. The size of this understatement verges on comical.



triumph for Lucius Antony, but was persuaded to allow it. However, Fulvia made known that she was the money behind the opulent celebration, not Lucius Antony (Dio 48.4.2-6).<sup>133</sup> It is stories such as this that make Fulvia an interesting character to study. Though it is impossible to ever know what Fulvia herself thought about Lucius Antony and his triumph, there is something striking about a woman refusing to be cowed by a patriarchal society.

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<sup>133</sup> Osgood 2014, 61-64 discusses Fulvia and her legacy. While most of his short sketch is to be admired, I disagree with Osgood's assertion that Appian and Dio are relating different traditions of the events during the resettlement of the veterans. Both sources tell generally the same story leading up to the Perusine war. They both assert that Fulvia and Lucius Antony, though the two disagreed, eventually worked together in an attempt to thwart Octavian's power accumulation. The authors certainly vary as to Fulvia's motives for attempting a war with Octavian. Appian does not relate the story of the triumph, but does relate trouble between Fulvia and Lucius Antony due to the timing of his apparent switch in sympathy towards those whose lands had been confiscated, and Appian makes the claim that Fulvia was eventually inclined to war out of jealousy of Cleopatra (App. *B. Civ.* 5.19). This claim of jealousy should be quickly dismissed, because Fulvia's demonstrated loyalty to the Antonine cause generally, and her husband specifically, would have been enough to persuade her into war. The use of Cleopatra and feminine jealousy is a device to show Fulvia's female weakness. (Welch 2012, 221 also observes that chronologically it would have been Glaphyra, not Cleopatra, she would have been jealous of, and further, that her husband's infidelity was not new or surprising.) Additionally, it is clear simply from the fact that Fulvia's acquiescence was required that her influence on the situation was significant. Dio, on the other hand, discusses the triumph to allude to a disagreement between Fulvia and Lucius Antony, and claims that the two went to war for Antony in name only, but secretly desired the power for themselves (Dio 48.5.4-5). This claim too should be quickly dismissed. Dio's assertion that the two wanted power for themselves makes Octavian's moves against them appear more justified, as their hostility was separate from Antony and thus separate from the triumviral agreement. Additionally, by claiming that Fulvia was not truly working for Antony's cause, all parties could later place all of the blame on her, allowing the two men to remain on peaceful terms. The two sources relate similar events, but with different understandings of motive and different views on who held the power in the relationship between Fulvia and Lucius Antony. To my mind, this should not be understood as two different traditions, but rather two different historians who have a complementary, though not identical, understanding of events.

Octavian's confiscations had an unforeseen side effect, the ire of the dispossessed (App. *B. Civ.* 5.14). Octavian had taken on this difficult duty of veteran resettlement in an attempt to gain the loyalty of the soldiers who, after Philippi, had much more respect for Antony. Yet, his plan hit a significant snag. Those people whom Octavian was dispossessing of land and possessions did not take the measures quietly, but rather became enraged. Lucius Antony and Fulvia saw this as an opportunity to try and curb Octavian's attempt at power and influence. Using this frustration, Lucius Antony and Fulvia began to act as champions for the dispossessed. It did not escape their notice that the number of dispossessed was larger and more easily incited than the returning soldiers. Yet, the two did not stop supporting the veterans either. Consequently, Octavian could not please either side, thus drawing the ire of everyone, while Lucius Antony and Fulvia toed the middle line and won the support of both groups (Dio 48.6.1-7.4).

This change showed much foresight on the part of Lucius Antony and Fulvia.<sup>134</sup> They, like Julius Caesar before them, perceived the power which could be won by gaining the support of the common people. Though Fulvia did not appear to agree with Lucius Antony's choice of timing, she was quickly won over.<sup>135</sup> To cause trouble for Octavian, Fulvia offered bribes to the soldiers (Livy *Per.* 125). In a further effort to

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<sup>134</sup> Bauman 1992, 87-88.

<sup>135</sup> As mentioned in n. 133, Appian writes that it was Fulvia's jealousy towards Cleopatra, incited by Manius, that convinced her to take up Lucius Antony's cause (App. *B. Civ.* 5.19). I believe this should be disregarded as androcentric and biased. Fulvia had witnessed Julius Caesar use the masses to take control of Rome. Her desire to see Antony as the sole power in Rome would have been enough to persuade her to resist Octavian. Bauman 1992, 88 also disregards this conclusion of jealous motivation, noting that it was Lucius Antony, not Fulvia who took charge of the military arrangements leading up to Perusia.

continue this harassment of Octavian and his resettlement, Fulvia sent her children by Antony, along with their uncle Lucius Antony, to accompany Octavian whilst he settled the final veteran colonies. This way Antonine relations would be present, reminding the veterans that it was not only Octavian to whom they owed their resettlement. During this journey, Octavian's cavalry went on a jaunt toward the coast of Bruttium where Sextus Pompey was menacing Italy. Lucius Antony feared for the lives of Fulvia and Antony's children and upbraided Octavian for endangering them before taking himself and the children to an Antonine colony to collect bodyguards (*App. B. Civ.* 5.19). It is difficult to ascertain if Lucius Antony truly feared for his and the children's lives, or if he wanted an excuse to leave the presence of Octavian.

This growing tension between Octavian and Lucius Antony (and by extension Fulvia) did not go unnoticed. Upon hearing of the rift, after Lucius Antony accused Octavian of endangering Antony's children, the officers of their armies brought the two men together in an attempt to mediate between them (*App. B. Civ.* 20; Dio 48.10.1-2). Despite the efforts of the moderating veterans, this attempt to reconcile the two men came to naught. Lucius Antony departed to Praeneste, claiming to fear for his life. Fulvia too fled to Praeneste, claiming she was in fear for her children's lives. Lucius Antony then turned his attention to organizing a concerted resistance to Octavian (*App. B. Civ.* 5.21; Dio 48.10.3).

It is here at Praeneste that the sources describe Fulvia at her most transgressive. When she arrives to the city, Dio has her acting like a military commander. She is described as holding deliberations with senators and knights, sending her orders out from

the city. Further, she girded herself with a sword, walking around so armed, using the watchword and berating the soldiers (Dio 48.10.3-4). Velleius Paterculus describes Fulvia as a woman only in her body, who took command of Praeneste as her base of war operations (Vell. Pat. 2.74.2-3). Florus, while describing Antony as a man of most evil character, writes that Fulvia, girded with a sword, incited Antony further (Florus 2.16.5). These descriptions, and their masculine depiction of Fulvia, show that classical authors perceived her as deeply transgressive.<sup>136</sup> Essentially, even if Fulvia did not physically put a sword on her belt and yell at the soldiers, she might as well have.<sup>137</sup>

The Perusine war itself did not last long. From Praeneste, Lucius Antony marched on Rome, easily defeating the defending Lepidus. He did not stay in the city and instead marched north in an attempt to reach his Antonine allies, Ventidius and Pollio, before they were cut off by Octavian and his allies, Agrippa and Salvidenus. Lucius Antony was distracted by Agrippa's attack on Sutrium, a town friendly to the Antonines. This ruse trapped Lucius Antony and he was forced to retreat to Perusia where he was surrounded. Though Fulvia and Manius ordered troops to assist Lucius Antony, they were unsuccessful (*App. B. Civ.* 5.33). After enduring a siege, Lucius Antony surrendered to Octavian in 40.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Hemelrijk 2004b, 185-197 generally, and specifically 190-193.

<sup>137</sup> The language of Florus 2.16.5 is somewhat ambiguous as to whether he literally meant she girded herself with physical sword, or if she figuratively girded herself with the responsibility of Antony's military service.

<sup>138</sup> For further discussion of the Perusine war, see Syme 1939, 208-215; Gabba 1971; Pelling 1996, 14-17; Osgood 2006, 159-173; Welch 2012, 218-238.

For all her transgressive involvement in the lead up to the Perusine war, Fulvia had very little involvement in the war itself. She remained at Praeneste, removed from the fighting. Though Fulvia disappears from the written record for the duration of the war, she appears in the material culture through sling bullets recovered from around the vicinity of Perusia.<sup>139</sup> The siege of Perusia lasted for months, until Lucius Antony had to surrender under threat of starvation, so the armies on both sides had plenty of time to exchange these sling bullets. Interestingly, though she was not physically present at Perusia, Fulvia is the target of some of the sexually explicit insults carved onto their surfaces. Similar to the claim of Velleius Paterculus that she was a woman only in body, the insults insinuate that Fulvia is not a normal woman.<sup>140</sup> Neither Lucius Antony nor Octavian were safe from the jabs of the soldiers, but this is not unexpected as they were both physically involved in the battle. To my mind, the inclusion of Fulvia on the insulting sling bullets proves how involved Fulvia was in the war. Even soldiers in the armies of Octavian and his allies believed she was a major player in the conflict, despite her corporeal absence from the battlefield. Though much of what is said of Fulvia in the ancient sources is certainly exaggerated by their desire to use her as an *exemplum* of a transgressive “bad” woman, it does appear that her contemporaries understood that she wielded a significant amount of power. The insinuations of masculinity and martial prowess are devices to convey this un-feminine transgression. Yet, as has been shown throughout, she only rarely stepped outside acceptable female behavior and in those

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<sup>139</sup> See Hallett 1977 for a full discussion of these sling bullets, or *glandes*.

<sup>140</sup> Hallett 1977, 157; Brennan 2012, 358.

cases, i.e. the decimations at Brundisium, the denial of Hortenia's plea, and the assumption of command at Praeneste, Fulvia was not so much breaking tradition, as she was seeking to expand the role of what it meant to be a Roman wife, loyal to her husband Antony above all else.<sup>141</sup>

In this context of Fulvia's wifely devotion, Antony's lack of involvement in the Perusine war is difficult to understand. The ancient sources are oblique when discussing Antony's involvement, or lack thereof. Plutarch inaccurately claims that while his brother and Fulvia made war in Antony's name, that he was under the control of Cleopatra (Plut. *Ant.* 28.1).<sup>142</sup> If Antony was not detained by Cleopatra, then another, more practical reason should be considered. Certainly the Antonine cause was not without military might, with at least three generals and their soldiers in addition to Lucius Antony and his

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<sup>141</sup> Hemelrijk 2004b, 191-193 saliently and succinctly discusses the use of masculinity to damn Fulvia's successful forays into the male world of politics and war through her role as supportive wife.

<sup>142</sup> Osgood 2006, 182-185 demonstrates that the timing of Plutarch is inaccurate. Though Antony and Cleopatra met in 41, their personal relationship was not yet so involved. Antony encountered her briefly at Tarsus in 41 before continuing with his plan to tour Syria. He did choose to spend the winter of 41 in Alexandria after his tour of Syria, but this should not be assumed to be entirely the will of Cleopatra. The winter season was stormy and Romans away from home sought pleasant diversions during this time. After his initial meeting with the Egyptian queen, Antony would surely have been interested in seeing what resources she might be able to provide him, thus the cosmopolitan city had many advantages as a winter haven. Despite these diversions, Antony was not under Cleopatra's control and he certainly would have been interested in the events unfolding in Italy which directly involved his wife and brother. Additionally, Antony would not see Cleopatra again until nearly four years later. It is doubtful a man described as "under the control" of the queen would wait such a length of time before returning to her arms. Pelling 1988, 199, notes that if Fulvia had cause to be jealous of anyone at this time, it would have been Glaphyra. The scathing verses preserved in Martial 11.20, ostensibly written by Octavian, also focus on Glaphyra. See also Scott 1933, 24-25; Delia 1991, 215-216 n.74.

army. It is possible that these generals were not confident in each other, nor in Lucius Antony since their commander Antony was not in Rome and so did not offer the support Lucius Antony needed to break the siege of Perusia.<sup>143</sup> This interpretation implies that Antony had little knowledge of the situation leading up to the Perusine war. This assumption too should be questioned.

Plutarch claims that Antony was surprised by the news of Lucius Antony and Fulvia's attempt to defeat Octavian (Plut. *Ant.* 30.1), but Plutarch remains unreliable during this time in Antony's life. There is little possibility that Antony was uninformed of his brother and Fulvia's actions during this time.<sup>144</sup> Rather, it seems more likely that Antony was distancing himself from the situation in Italy in hopes that it would be successful without his involvement. As a co-triumvir with Octavian, Antony could not have been seen to openly oppose him but neither Lucius Antony nor Fulvia would be bound by the triumviral arrangement. It is possible, seeing that Lucius Antony espoused Republican ideals, that Antony was a Republican in Caesarian clothing, unable to openly support his brother.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Syme 1939, 211

<sup>144</sup> Pelling 1988, 197-199; Pelling 1996, 15; Welch 2012, 218-219.

<sup>145</sup> Welch 2012, 218-230 believably postulates that Lucius Antony and his Republican agenda was juxtaposed against Octavian and the continuation of the triumviral arrangement. She argues that Antony supported Lucius Antony, but because of the tenuous political situation with Octavian, Antony needed to conceal his involvement. Importantly, Welch convincingly argues that it was not lack of will which caused the Antonine allies to fail, but instead that the circumstances surrounding Pollio, Ventidius, and Plancus did not allow them to provide assistance to Lucius Antony. To my mind this fits well with the bias in the classical sources. These sources could claim from outward appearances that Antony was fickle, wavering in support of his brother, and aligning with the Augustan propaganda concerning Antony's character, or lack thereof.

Yet, if Fulvia and her involvement is considered in conjunction with the likelihood that Antony was indeed supportive of the Antonine cause and subsequent action in Italy, I believe it is more likely that Fulvia was loyal to Caesarian sentiments, supported from afar by Antony. With Welch, I agree that Lucius Antony set himself up as the Republican alternative to Octavian. I also agree that Antony would have been in concealed league with his brother concerning open opposition to Octavian.<sup>146</sup> But I am less inclined to agree with Welch that Antony held secret Republican sympathies. Antony's previous support of Julius Caesar, and later easy adoption of the trappings of Hellenistic monarchy appear to suggest he had something less than Republican in mind.<sup>147</sup> Though Lucius Antony's speech to Octavian decrying Fulvia as a monarchist is unlikely to reflect exactly what he said, it certainly is indicative of what was believed to be at stake (*App. B. Civ.* 5.54). Throughout her life Fulvia was married to supporters of Julius Caesar, and the behavior of Fulvia herself, her absolute support of her husband, suggest she might have what would be called "monarchist" leanings.<sup>148</sup> Her support of Antony seems to have more in common with a queen's support of a king, rather than a Roman Republican wife's support of her consular husband. Lucius Antony, if he had been victorious, would have provided a welcome defeat of Octavian, allowing Antony,

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<sup>146</sup> Welch 2012, 218-230.

<sup>147</sup> Antony's embrace of Hellenistic leanings will be discussed later.

<sup>148</sup> *Oros.* 6.18.17 notes that Fulvia "exercised power in the way one would expect of a woman, as she transformed consular into regal power." Translation by A.T. Fear 2010, 303. Bauman 1992, 89 sees Fulvia as a "true Caesarian," which appears true from her multiple marriages to *populares*, but it is unclear if Julius Caesar saw himself as a monarch/had regal aspirations. See also n. 129.



and thus Fulvia, to acquire a larger share of the power. There is of course, no way to know what Antony would have done with such control of Italy.

After Perugia fell, Fulvia fled from Praeneste to Brundisium and then left Italy all together, to Athens (*App. B. Civ.* 5.50, 52; Dio 48.15.1-2; Vell. Pat. 2.76.2). Antony met his wife in Athens where he was said to have upbraided her in anger. Though Fulvia had fallen ill, Antony left her in Greece to set sail and deal with Domitius Ahenobarbus. Her death soon after in Greece, at Sicyon, was described as a death willingly accepted. The anger of Antony demoralized the indomitable Fulvia, and the sources claim she died of “heartbreak.” When Antony was given the news of Fulvia’s death, he was saddened as he knew that he was somewhat the cause for her fate (*App. B. Civ.* 5.52, 55, 59, 62; Dio 48.28.3; *Plut. Ant.* 30.3).<sup>149</sup>

For such a strong character in life, Fulvia’s death from “heartbreak” seems an anticlimactic end. She was a woman who insulted Cicero’s decapitated head, told the matrons of Rome to complain elsewhere, and girded herself with a sword yet she dies, alone, heartbroken at Sicyon. Frustratingly, there is no way to know her true cause of death. Considering her devotion to Antony’s cause, perhaps the defeat did indeed break her. It need not be heartbreak at the anger of Antony. Her personal investment in the politics and the actions preceding Perugia could mean that the defeat was keenly felt by Fulvia herself; her heartbreak could be at the failure generally. If she had not died at Sicyon, her reintroduction into Rome would have been difficult, another reason to

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<sup>149</sup> Plutarch is again unreliable with his timeline. He writes that Antony did not reach Fulvia before she died, which is incorrect. Pelling 1988, 199-200 notes that Plutarch is not much interested in Fulvia, calling Plutarch’s portrayal of her “flat.”

despair. Yet, her devotion to her family and children make it unlikely that Fulvia would simply resign herself to death. This was a woman who had survived the scandals of her husband Clodius and the character assassination of Cicero, after all; she was not new to difficult situations.

Though Antony might have been saddened at Fulvia's death, he hastened to use it to his own benefit. The same passages in Dio and Appian that concern her death, also mention that both Antony and Octavian used Fulvia as a scapegoat on which to place the blame for their fractured relationship. Her death meant that the two men could reconcile (App. *B. Civ.* 5.55, 59, 62; Dio 48.28.3).<sup>150</sup> Antony's mother Julia, now his closest female relation, seems to be active in this reconciliation also. After Perusia, Julia fled to Sextus Pompey for safety. Antony was appreciative of how Julia was escorted by ships and delivered safely by Sextus Pompey. In gratitude, Antony vowed that he would side with Sextus Pompey in any military action against Octavian, and if there was not to be war, Antony would seek to reconcile Octavian to Sextus Pompey (App. *B. Civ.* 5.52). Later, when Cocceius persuaded Octavian to reach out to Antony, Octavian wrote to Julia to begin his overture to Antony (App. *B. Civ.* 5.63).<sup>151</sup> The entire Antonine clan seemed to be perfectly content to blame the whole Perusine war on the conveniently dead Fulvia and move forward with the next stage of their political plans.

Antony and Octavian's reconciliation would be sealed with the marriage of Octavia to Antony in late 40. Before moving on to the details of the agreement and

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<sup>150</sup> Hemelrijk 2004b, 193, "Surely, her [Fulvia's] sudden death in 40 B.C. was a relief, because it opened the way to reconciliation between Octavian and Antony..."

<sup>151</sup> Osgood 2014, 57.

marriage, a few observations about Fulvia, and Octavia, should be discussed. It must be remembered that Octavia was living in Fulvia's orbit throughout all the events of 43-40. Like Fulvia, Octavia was active during the proscriptions. The two women's places as close relations to the triumvirs would have kept them in constant contact during these years. Thus, Octavia would have been witness to all of Fulvia's successes, and importantly, her failures. Fulvia pushed on the edges of proper female behavior, testing the malleability of the boundaries of indirect female power.

After Fulvia's death Antony continued to menace Octavian, leading to the once-triumvirs' final showdown in 31. The eventual defeat of Antony meant that Octavian and the Augustan propaganda damned Fulvia as the meddling mannish wife of the loser. Yet, when that propaganda is peeled back, it is clear that though the ancient sources harped on her transgressions, these transgressions, when examined, are shown to be minor extensions of the acceptable indirect female power wielded by elite Republican women. It is almost as if the ruthlessness of both the earlier Ciceronian and later Augustan propaganda was a fearful reaction to Fulvia's ability to succeed. These men, and Octavia, saw how a woman could succeed in entering the traditionally male areas of direct power through traditionally female and indirect conduits.

### **Octavia's last husband, Marcus Antonius, cos. 44, 38, 34, and 31**

The competitive relationship between Octavian and Antony was in need of repair, even before Fulvia and Lucius Antony strained it further with their Perusine efforts. This tension, compounded by the Perusine War, led to a face-to-face meeting of Antony and Octavian at Brundisium in September of 40. After his winter in 41 at Alexandria, Antony sailed for Greece where he met Fulvia for the final time, as previously discussed. Antony then set sail to meet with the fleet of Domitius Ahenobarbus, who was near the coast of Italy. Antony's friend Pollio had already secured Domitius Ahenobarbus' support, and together the men sailed toward Brundisium. Yet when he arrived, the city refused Antony entry, so he proceeded to lay siege to it. To counter this aggressive move by Antony, Octavian gathered forces as he marched to meet his fellow triumvir.

At Brundisium, it was the soldiers of Antony and Octavian who began the peace talks. The armies did not wish to fight each other in another civil war (*App. B. Civ.* 5.57, 59, 64). The soldiers found a negotiator in Cocceius, a friend to both men (*App. B. Civ.* 5.60-62). The efforts of Cocceius brought the parties of Antony and Octavian together, and with the help of Maecenas, a friend of Octavian, and Pollio, a friend of Antony, the two triumvirs were reconciled (*App. B. Civ.* 5.64; *Plut. Ant.* 30.4; *Vell. Pat.* 2.76.3). This reconciliation included a re-partitioning of the triumviral power, although the newly drawn responsibilities were very similar to the previously agreed upon responsibilities. Antony would be given the east, tasked with the Parthian problem and the retrieval of

Crassus' lost battle standards. Octavian would take the west, and Lepidus was gifted the task of governing Africa (*App. B. Civ.* 5.65; Dio 48.28.3-29; *Plut. Ant.* 30.4).<sup>152</sup>

It was to seal this peace that Antony agreed to marry Octavia. Fulvia's death was an opportunity and Antony, and his family, seized upon it, blaming his now dead wife for all the strife between the two men (*App. B. Civ.* 5.55, 59, 62; Dio 48.28.3). Octavian too had an opportune death in his extended family. Gaius Marcellus, husband to Octavia, also died in 40. The widowing of both Octavia and Antony allowed for a marriage agreement to seal a renewed peace and cooperation between Antony and Octavian. This marriage would be a far closer bond than the previously attempted marriage between Octavian and Fulvia's daughter Clodia.

After the agreement at Brundisium was made, Antony and Octavian traveled to Rome in November of 40 to celebrate the nuptials (*App. B. Civ.* 5.66; Dio 48.31.3; *Plut. Ant.* 31.3; *Vell. Pat.* 2.78.1). None of the classical sources speak to how Octavia felt about her impending marriage to Antony. She would have known Antony, at least peripherally, for most of her adult life. He had served under her great-uncle's command, and since Julius Caesar's death, Antony had been one of the leading men in Rome. Additionally, after the formation of the second triumvirate, Octavia, as Octavian's closest female relation, would have been in close social contact with Antony. If her brother had not informed her, then slanderous gossip would have made her aware of Antony's previous extramarital relationship with Glaphyra and his new relationship with Cleopatra.

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<sup>152</sup> See Syme 1939 214-220; Huzar 1979, 135-140; Pelling 1996, 17-20; Osgood 2006, 188-201; Welch 2012a, 230-238 for more detailed discussions of Brundisium and the terms of the agreement.

Very near to the time Octavia would be married to Antony in late 40, Cleopatra was delivered of twins, later named Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene, fathered by Octavia's soon-to-be husband during his winter in Alexandria in 41.<sup>153</sup>

It is unclear from the sources if Octavia was consulted prior to her brother offering her as a marriage prospect. As she was around twenty-six in 40, it seems unlikely she would not have been consulted on the matter but the fact that Octavian was gathering troops on his march toward Brundisium to confront Antony meant that he was not in Rome immediately prior to ask her. It is certainly feasible, however, that he had the marriage in mind before he left. As an elite widowed woman, Octavia would have understood that remarriage was expected of her, and in this case, the political and military importance of this marriage would not have escaped her notice. One wonders, however, if she imagined her next marriage would have happened so quickly.

Traditionally, there was a ten month waiting period for Roman women to remarry after the death of their husband. This time span protected the legitimacy of any children by a widow's dead husband.<sup>154</sup> Octavia and Antony were given special dispensation to marry, even though ten months had not passed since Gaius Marcellus had died (Plut. *Ant.* 31.3). It is possible Octavia was given this permission because she was clearly pregnant with a child (Dio 48.31.3). This child could have been Marcella Minor, but it is also

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<sup>153</sup> The twins were conceived in the winter of 41 while Antony wintered in Alexandria, meaning Cleopatra would have delivered them between September and December of 40. The agreement of Brundisium was made in October of 40, and the marriage of Antony and Octavia was in November of 40.

<sup>154</sup> This law is traditionally associated with Numa. See Plut. *Num.* 12.2 and Plut. *Cor.* 39.5. See also Treggiari 1991a, 493-495.

possible that Octavia lost this unborn child mentioned by Dio. The disagreement between the sources, and their general silence on precise birth dates of any of Octavia's female children, makes it difficult to ascertain a clear answer. A marital dispensation could be easily and quickly granted if Octavia was showing her pregnancy, or perhaps if she had very recently delivered Marcella Minor, making it impossible for her to be pregnant with a child of her deceased husband.<sup>155</sup> The seriousness of the rift between Octavian and Antony and the threat of another civil war could have also provided a strong motivation to grant a dispensation for Antony's marriage to Octavia. Regardless of the cause for the dispensation, the marriage was legally permissible and Octavia was married to Antony in Rome.

The marriage of Antony and Octavia was "the outward, symbolic act that guaranteed *concordia* between Octavian and Antonius, and *pax* for the people of Italy."<sup>156</sup> As such, the nuptials were widely celebrated. In addition to the traditional wedding celebrations, the senate granted *ovationes* for Octavian and Antony so that the two men entered Rome as victors (Dio 48.31.2-3; Suet. *Aug.* 22).<sup>157</sup> An *ovatio* was a lesser version of a full triumph, which was awarded for great military victories. The senate granted this double *ovatio* in celebration of a peaceful victory, a victory without

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<sup>155</sup> Tarn 1932, 157 n. 6 believes that Dio incorrectly deduced that the marital dispensation was due to Octavia being pregnant at the time of marriage. Treggiari 1991a, 494 n. 84 believes Octavia was pregnant at the time, delivering Marcella Minor after her marriage to Antony.

<sup>156</sup> Duquesnay 1976, 24.

<sup>157</sup> See Treggiari 1991a, 161-170 for an overview of the traditional ceremony and celebration surrounding Roman marriages.

the need for a military battle. This appears to be an unusual non-military grant of an *ovatio*.<sup>158</sup> The granting of a military honor for a non-military action speaks to the importance of the agreement between Antony and Octavian, and highlights how exhausted the Roman people were from civil war.

Even the literature of the time celebrated Octavia and Antony's marriage. The poet Virgil wrote his fourth *Eclogue* for Pollio, the consul of 40, and, as noted above, one of the negotiators at Brundisium. Pollio's consulship, in conjunction with the peace secured at Brundisium, meant that Republican, constitutional government could return the Roman world to the normality it enjoyed before Julius Caesar's assassination. Within the poem, Virgil refers to a child born of illustrious, semi-divine parents who would rule over a peaceful, prosperous Rome. The hoped for child was to be the son of Antony and Octavia, though neither are named explicitly within the poem.<sup>159</sup> Antony had, and would continue to, claim descent from Hercules, the son of Jupiter. Octavia was of the Julii family, who claimed Venus as their divine ancestress.<sup>160</sup> Though there is little in the poem which sheds light on Octavia, it is worthwhile to note that the mother of the child is referenced, when Virgil implores the divine child to smile at his mother (Ver. *Ecl.* 4.60-

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<sup>158</sup> Sumi 2005, 196; Osgood 2006, 191; Beard 2007, 267; Lange 2013; 80-81.

<sup>159</sup> The interpretation of Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue* I am presenting here is only one of many. Yet, to my mind, it is the only interpretation which makes sense of the cryptic poem. I am not alone in this interpretation of the messianic child as the hoped for offspring of Antony and Octavia, as Courtney 2010, 33 notes, "...what is now probably the majority opinion that Vergil has in mind the envisioned offspring, by convention assumed to be a boy of the union of Antony and Octavia." For a longer discussion of the multiple interpretations, see Osgood 2006, 193-201. As he aptly notes on 193, n. 127, "The bibliography on *Eclogue* 4 is immense."

<sup>160</sup> DuQuesnay 1976, 35-37.



64). This joyous child will be the answer to the hardships which had plagued the Roman people, and a conclusion by Osgood is worth quoting in full:

Antony and Octavia, as partners in the marriage that sealed the pact, were both the agents *and the symbols* of the new concord. Vergil, in a most original way, extends this logic by making their future child the agent *and the symbol* of the new *pax* that is born from *concordia*. This peace, like the boy, was “conceived” in Pollio’s consulship, will be “born” shortly after, and will steadily “grow” over the next two decades to reach full size. Thus, though the infant is imagined as a real Roman child, he also can serve as an allegory of something larger, a new era free of the last generation’s sins.<sup>161</sup>

This marriage of Octavia and Antony was an important step toward a lasting *pax* and the end of the civil bloodshed which had divided the Roman people. During the celebration of her marriage and the festivities in Rome when Octavian and Antony returned to a peacefully won *ovatio*, Octavia could not have failed to see the hope which the Roman people were placing upon her shoulders. She was to be a living symbol of *concordia* and the bearer of *pax*. One wonders how heavily this responsibility was felt.

Through marriage to Antony, Octavia had been given an important diplomatic position by her brother Octavian. Though it was masked in the traditional trappings of marriage, Octavia was essentially accepting a diplomatic assignment with Antony. She would be the conduit through which these men communicated.<sup>162</sup> The question of Octavia’s agency looms large over this union. Octavia did not choose this marriage or this diplomatic mission, and she was likely given some instruction from her brother Octavian about what he wanted from Antony. Yet a lack of agency in the choice to marry

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<sup>161</sup> Osgood 2006, 197. Emphatic italics by Osgood.

<sup>162</sup> Bauman 1992, 92, “Thus the dynastic marriage, already an established practice among noble families, was being put to one of its most important uses. As brothers-in-law the two dynasts might be better placed to reach an accommodation.”

does not necessarily imply a complete lack of agency from Octavia while married. It should be remembered that even if she was given instruction by her brother, Octavia would have been interacting with Antony on a personal basis, not able to constantly consult Octavian about what she should be doing or saying. It would have been up to Octavia alone to handle her husband on a daily domestic basis. She would be expected to step into the role of wife and household manager for her new husband, which would include rearing all of their children and arranging for their continuing education, as well as hosting his social engagements and receiving his *clientela* when he was not at home.

Of the classical sources, Plutarch is the most interested in creating a vivid picture of Octavia.<sup>163</sup> The biographer describes Octavia as *χρημα θαυμαστον ως λεγεται γυναικος γενομενην* (Plut. Ant. 31.1) - “[Octavia] who was, they say, a marvel of a woman.”<sup>164</sup> As a marvelous example of Roman womanhood, it was hoped that Octavia’s beauty, intelligence, and dignity would be able to keep Antony’s attention and keep the peace between her brother and her husband (Plut. Ant. 31.2-3). It is difficult, in light of later events, not to see Antony and Octavia’s marriage as doomed from the start.<sup>165</sup> Yet, the *concordia* between Antony and Octavia, celebrated on coins and the hopeful tone of Virgil show that Octavia’s new marriage was not constantly overshadowed by Antony’s

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<sup>163</sup> Pelling 1988, 201-202 n. 31.1-4 suggests that Plutarch’s interest is merely to create a Roman foil for the Egyptian Cleopatra. While this is certainly the case, it does not mean his portrait of Octavia is entirely inaccurate, as Osgood 2006, 189 n. 110 notes.

<sup>164</sup> Pelling 1988, 202 n. 31.2

<sup>165</sup> Many secondary sources describe Octavia’s marriage to Antony in disparaging terms. For example, Wood 2000, 31, “...the marriage had dim prospects.”

later actions.<sup>166</sup> At first blush, this marriage was believed to be the beginning of a new era.

After Antony settled the affairs of governance with Octavian in Rome, the two triumvirs made an agreement with the continually vexing Sextus Pompey at Misenum in the spring of 39 which gave the son of Pompey control of Sicily and Sardinia. In return Sextus Pompey agreed to protect the sea around Italy from pirates and send much needed grain to Rome.<sup>167</sup> Sometime in the late summer or early autumn of 39, Octavia was delivered of the hoped for child of Virgil's fourth *Eclogue* (Plut. *Ant.* 33.3).<sup>168</sup> It was not the prophesied boy-child, but rather a girl, whom they named Antonia Major. The new parents then left Italy and sailed for Greece, spending the winter of 39 in Athens.

The contented time the couple spent together in Greece in the winter of 39 and the early part of 38, to my mind, exposes that their marriage was not doomed from the start. While in Athens, Antony is described as relaxed, putting aside the insignia of command

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<sup>166</sup> The coins featuring Octavia will be discussed later, along with the other material culture associated with her. See pg. 155-160.

<sup>167</sup> See Syme 1939, 220-224; Huzar 1978, 140-142; Pelling 1996, 17-21; Osgood 2006, 202-242; Welch 2012a, 238-251 for a more detailed assessment of the events of 40-38 and the Treaty of Misenum.

<sup>168</sup> It appears that Octavia gave birth to their first child, Antonia Major, before the winter of 39, around nine months after her marriage in November of 40. This casts some suspicion on Dio's claim (Dio 48.31.3) that she was pregnant at her marriage to Antony, as the timeline to have another child before the next winter would require an extraordinarily quick conception. Though it is possible that, if pregnant, Octavia gave birth to Marcella Minor immediately after her wedding, in late November or early December 40 perhaps, and then became pregnant again and thus gave birth to Antonia around September or October, before the journey to Athens in the winter of 39. Her fertility was certainly not in question, as she gave Gaius Marcellus three children within the space of four years. Additionally, Antony's fertility was also attested to by the two sons he fathered with Fulvia, and the twins born to Cleopatra.

and walking around the city as if an average citizen (Plut. *Ant.* 33.3-4).<sup>169</sup> He went to lectures of public teachers, and took meals in the Greek fashion. He attended festivals with Octavia, appearing very much in love with his new wife. Octavia looks to have had a positive effect on Antony outside of their domestic bliss, as he was said to have dealt with embassies which had been previously kept waiting, and handled all the preparations for his coming campaign (App. *B. Civ.* 5.76).

Even the city of Athens was enamored of the marvelous Octavia. She was given honors by the city of Athens, which would supposedly arouse Cleopatra's jealousy years later when the queen was in the city with Antony (Plut. *Ant.* 57.1). Octavia's honors included being celebrated as Athena Polias, as counterpart to Antony as Dionysos.<sup>170</sup> The now semi-divine family settled into Athens, where Octavia, newborn Antonia Major, the Marcellas, young Marcellus, as well as Fulvia's sons by Antony, Antyllus, and Iullus, would reside for the next two years.<sup>171</sup>

Antony left Greece, and his family, in 38 to meet with his commander Ventidius, who had been victorious against the Parthians, in Syria. He would not stay in the region for long. The continued animosity between Octavian and Sextus Pompey interrupted Antony's involvement in the campaign. At the request of Octavian, who was in need of

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<sup>169</sup> Huzar 1985, 105, "His new wife Octavia, unique in her husband's experience, brought him the satisfactions of unwonted domesticity."

<sup>170</sup> Raubitschek 1946.

<sup>171</sup> Though the sources do not mention the whereabouts of the two Marcellas and young Marcellus, they all would have been under the age of 4, making it unlikely that Octavia would leave them behind in Italy. Similarly, the sources are quiet on the whereabouts of Antyllus and Iullus at this time. Yet, a later passage, Plut. *Ant.* 35.5, in which these sons of Fulvia and Antony are sent back with Octavia to Rome, imply that the boys had been with her in Athens.

assistance in his dispute with Sextus Pompey, Antony sailed to Italy in 38 for a meeting with his fellow triumvir at Brundisium. Yet, when Antony arrived, Octavian was not there to meet him and, as the city had in 40, Brundisium would not allow him entry (App. *B. Civ.* 5.78). Antony was justifiably annoyed and he refused to wait around at Octavian's pleasure, though he wrote his fellow triumvir a letter not to break the treaty with Sextus Pompey (App. *B. Civ.* 5.79). Antony would return to Athens and Octavia for the winter of 38.

Once again the relationship between Antony and Octavian was in need of repair.<sup>172</sup> This time it would be Octavia who sought to mend their differences. Antony, this time with his wife, left Athens in early 37, sailing toward Italy. At her own request, the once again pregnant Octavia went ahead of her husband to meet her brother at Tarentum (App. *B. Civ.* 5.93; Plut. *Ant.* 35.1). She met with Octavian, as well as his friends Agrippa and Maecenas. Only after winning over Octavian's friends was she able to discuss the divisive issues lingering between her brother and Antony (App. *B. Civ.* 5.93; Plut. *Ant.* 35.2). Octavian laid out to his sister his issues with her husband: first, her brother felt abandoned by Antony when Octavian was in need of help, and second, he felt betrayed that Antony had sent a freedman to Lepidus, seeking to turn the lesser triumvir against him.

Octavia had ready explanations for both grievances: as to the first, Maecenas had already explained the circumstances surrounding Antony's inability to assist Octavian,

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<sup>172</sup> See Syme 1939, 225-226; Huzar 1978, 142-143; Pelling 1996, 21-27; Osgood 2006, 242-243; Welch 2012a, 261-267 for more on the fraught relationship between Octavian and Antony, as well as an overview of the Treaty of Tarentum.

and as to the second, she was aware that the freedman had been sent to Lepidus, but it was to arrange a marriage between Antonia Major and Lepidus' son, not to plot against Antony. To back this claim, Antony offered to send the freedman to Octavian with permission to torture the truth from him (*App. B. Civ.* 5.93). Further, Octavia pleaded with her brother not to make her the most wretched woman. For all eyes were upon her as wife of one emperor and sister of the other, and if the two men fought, one must prevail. Regardless of which one it was, Octavia would become the most miserable, wretched woman (*Plut. Ant.* 35.3).

Octavia's reasoning and pleas softened her brother's anger and he agreed to meet Antony peacefully (*App. B. Civ.* 5.93; *Dio* 48.54.3; *Plut. Ant.* 35.3-4). Both men arrived to the arranged meeting from opposite sides of the river at the same time. Antony leapt from his chariot and, without escort, boarded a small skiff and rowed toward Octavian. Seeing the trust of Antony and believing him a friend, Octavian did the same. The two triumvirs met in the middle of the river. They contended with each other about which bank of the river to return to. Octavian prevailed, accompanying Antony to his side of the river, saying he wished to see his sister. Placing his trust in Antony, Octavian rode with his fellow triumvir in his chariot unprotected, even spending the night in Antony's camp without a guard. To return the favor, Antony spent the following night similarly in Octavian's camp (*App. B. Civ.* 5.94 relates the story of the mid-river meeting; *Plut. Ant.* 35.4 does not give details of the initial mid-river meeting, but concurs that Octavian went to Antony's camp out of consideration for Octavia).

Whether the slightly absurd story of their mid-river meeting is accurate or not, the two men appeared ready to negotiate with each other after Octavia's intervention. The two triumvirs began to make military arrangements in an effort to assist one another. Antony would give Octavian ships to use against Sextus Pompey (App. *B. Civ.* 5.95 records 120 ships; Dio 48.54.2 does not record a specific number; Plut. *Ant.* 35.4 records 100 "bronze beaked galleys"). Octavian would give Antony troops for his continuing Parthian campaign (App. *B. Civ.* 5.95 records 20,000 legionaries; Dio 48.54.2 does not record the number of "heavily armed" troops; Plut. *Ant.* 35.4 records two legions). Separate from the arrangements made between Octavian and Antony, Octavia persuaded both men to give each other additional military assistance. Octavian would provide Antony an additional 1000 men, to be selected by Antony (App. *B. Civ.* 5.95; Plut. *Ant.* 35.4). Antony, in return, would provide Octavian additional ships (App. *B. Civ.* 5.95 records 10 additional *phaseli*, a ship which was a combination war-merchant vessel; Plut. *Ant.* 35.4 records 20 light sailing vessels). Further, the legal triumviral arrangement originally made in 42, which expired at the beginning of 37, was renewed for five more years (App. *B. Civ.* 5.95; Dio 48.54.6). To further strengthen their ties, Octavian betrothed his daughter by Scribonia, Julia, to Antony's eldest son by Fulvia, Antyllus. Likewise, Antony betrothed his daughter by Octavia, Antonia Major, to Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, the son of Domitius Ahenobarbus (Dio 48.54.4 undercuts these betrothals by describing them as pretenses).

The Treaty of Tarentum showcased, on a public stage, the negotiating skills Octavia was utilizing in private on a day-to-day basis.<sup>173</sup> Her first marriage, to Gaius Marcellus, was to an outspoken political opponent of her great-uncle Julius Caesar. Her second marriage, to Antony, was to an outspoken political and military opponent of her brother. Her first marriage can be seen as long term preparation for her second marriage. With Gaius Marcellus, Octavia was not under the public scrutiny she was with Antony and thus had the privacy to make mistakes or gambles which would not be recorded. Again, we must strive to keep our knowledge of how this story ends from coloring the perception of how important this negotiation was. In the end, the peace between Antony and Octavian would crumble and the civil war would be renewed. Yet here, in 37,

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<sup>173</sup> Singer 1947 believes Octavia was not important at all to the negotiations at Tarentum. She writes on 174, “What is more, two such determined strategists would scarcely heed the words of a mere women.” This quote exposes Singer’s androcentric bias. The extensive work by historians in the later part of the twentieth century spilling over into the twenty-first century, such as Bauman 1992, Cluett 1998, Brennan 2012, and Osgood 2014, just to name a very small fraction of the scholarship, show that the indirect role of women in Roman politics was not to be brushed aside, or touted as “exaggerated.” At the time she was writing, Singer did not have access to the vibrant scholarship which explores the ways Roman women used their agency. As discussed many times throughout this thesis, Roman women did not have direct access to Roman politics, but that did not mean they were helpless. Instead, these women used what agency they did have, in their roles as mother and wife, to assist and influence the men around them. More recent articles such as Pelling 1996, 26, still question the extent of Octavia’s involvement in the treaty. There is no doubt that the later Augustan propaganda painted Octavia’s mediation with wide, positive brushstrokes, but this is hardly reason to question her involvement. Many other women, such as Antony’s mother Julia, had previously acted as intermediaries, mentioned in passing as she and others were not part of the main narrative, see Cluett 1998. Octavia is indeed fortunate that her brother triumphed in the end or the historians and the record might not concern themselves with her at all.



Octavia prevented this very outcome.<sup>174</sup> Although Octavia might not have spoken the graceful words Plutarch ascribes to her, her deeds were quite a feat.<sup>175</sup> Unlike Fulvia, who chose only to represent the interests of her husband, Octavia carefully balanced between husband, brother, and on a larger scale, Rome. Octavia used herself as a kind of safe middle ground, a starting point of negotiation which the two men could agree upon. This treaty at Tarentum, with her perfectly executed moderation, put Octavia into the ranks of other historic female moderators of Roman history, such as the Sabine women and the mother of Coriolanus.

Now that the peaceful arrangements of the Treaty of Tarentum had been agreed upon, the two triumvirs went their separate ways, turning their attention back to military matters. Antony left Italy once more, taking Octavia with him as far as Corcyra, on the western coast of Greece. Once there, Antony changed his mind about his wife accompanying him and instead sent the pregnant Octavia back towards Italy to return to Rome with all of his children, so that she would not be exposed to the danger of his Parthian campaign (App. *B. Civ.* 5.95; Dio 48.54.5; Plut. *Ant.* 35.5). Appian and Plutarch do not mention Octavia sailing with Antony to Greece, but instead have him immediately

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<sup>174</sup> Bauman 1992, 92 writes that “..in reality Tarentum had been the pinnacle of her achievement, and from now on it would be downhill all the way.” Though he is accurate in this assessment, it must be remembered that Octavia would not have known this would be her last mediation between the two men.

<sup>175</sup> Welch 2011, 320 describes Octavia as “...actively trying to maintain harmony between her brother and husband.” And indeed, as Welch notes in the same article on 330-331, n. 39, “We should note that whenever he mentions her, Plutarch observes Octavia’s agency.” Welch, and I, disagree with the suggestion by Pelling 1988, 201-202, that Octavia’s active agency is a creation by Plutarch.

leave the pregnant Octavia in her brother's charge. Thus, it appears Dio includes this detail to foreshadow the impending reunion between Antony and Cleopatra. To my mind, this is a teleological way to interpret Octavia's return to Rome. As Octavia was pregnant, it follows that Antony would not want or allow her, and their young children, to join him on his upcoming Parthian campaign. Back within the safety of Rome, Octavia would deliver another daughter, Antonia Minor, in early to mid 36.<sup>176</sup>

Due to the delay at Tarentum and the subsequent negotiations, Antony did not reach the east until late 37. He spent the winter in Antioch, planning for his next year of campaigning. Assigning loyal men to newly created client kingdoms, Antony sought to strengthen his power by reorganizing the east. Cleopatra was a beneficiary of some of these land grants by Antony, although not any more so than the other client kings. He even refused some of the lands she coveted, such as Judaea. Though in the winter of 37 Cleopatra joined Antony in Antioch, gaining an advantage in the way only a woman could. She quickly became pregnant by Antony once more, giving birth to another son,

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<sup>176</sup> Bauman 1992, 93 writes, "The pretext was that he did not want to expose her to the dangers of his forthcoming Parthian campaign, but it was widely believed that he wanted to be free to continue his liaison with Cleopatra (Dio 48.54.5)."; Syme 1939, 226 writes, "He may have already tired of Octavia." But, at this time, as mentioned before n. 142, the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra was not yet so involved. Antony had not seen the queen since the winter of 41, and there is no reason to believe he was desperate to shed Octavia so that he might resume his relationship with the Cleopatra. As Huzar 1985, 107 notes "He did not see Cleopatra again for almost four years, indeed made no effort to." Indeed, Antony and Octavia's contented time in Athens, coupled with the two children the marriage produced, make it unlikely Antony was "tired" of Octavia. Additionally, at Tarentum, Octavia had proved helpful in negotiating additional troops for his upcoming military actions. His departure is more likely connected to a desire to return to the Parthian campaign which had been significantly delayed by both Sextus Pompey and Octavian.

Ptolemy Philadelphus in late 36. Additionally, it appears Antony also re-named the twins born to Cleopatra in 40, Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene (Plut. *Ant.* 36.2-3).<sup>177</sup> Though undoubtedly a romantic element could certainly have existed between Antony and Cleopatra, their relationship was mutually beneficial outside of the bedroom. Cleopatra clearly wanted to expand her territory and understood that Antony would be the one to assist her with this goal. Antony's power too would be strengthened by friendly relations with the ruler of Egypt, Cleopatra had resources and money which could be useful. Indeed, Antony's love of the queen did not stop him from beginning his Parthian campaign. Yet, his tactics in Parthia proved faulty and his attempt to siege the city of Phraara failed. After the withdrawal of one of his allies, Antony was forced to abandon the city and retreat. By the time Antony and the army returned to safety, he had lost nearly one third of his entire army. The victories of Octavian during this same year, over Sextus Pompey first, and then bloodlessly retiring the still lingering Lepidus, likely felt like rubbing salt into Antony's wounded pride.<sup>178</sup>

When Octavian returned, triumphant, to Rome in 35, he celebrated an *ovatio*, but declined a full triumph. Rather, he had the senate give Octavia and Octavian's wife, Livia, an extraordinary grant.<sup>179</sup> The two women were given the ability to administer

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<sup>177</sup> The original names given to the twins by their mother were not recorded, thus I have chosen to call them by these names, given in 36, throughout the thesis.

<sup>178</sup> For a more detailed discussion of late 37-36, as well as Antony's situation in the east, and his failed Parthian campaign, see Syme 1939, 259-265; Huzar 1978; 143-180; Pelling 1996, 27-36; Osgood 2006, 243-250, 298-335.

<sup>179</sup> Flory 1993, 293-294 argues that these grants were focused more on Octavia than Livia.

their own affairs without a guardian, the right to statues, and the same inviolability given to the tribunes of the people, called *sacrosanctitas* (Dio 49.38.1).<sup>180</sup> The ability to administer their own affairs without a guardian, though helpful, likely changed little for the women. The fathers of both Octavia and Livia had been dead at the time of their second marriages. This meant that at the time of Gaius Marcellus' death, in Octavia's case, and her divorce, in Livia's case, their property, which would have reverted to their fathers, would instead be given to the women themselves, likely under the care of a guardian. Yet, this guardian was only a legal formality.<sup>181</sup> With their husbands often out of the city and away from their households, both Octavia and Livia had likely been operating as if they already did have complete control over their own affairs.

The grant of tribunician sacrosanctity, on the other hand, is much more interesting and novel. This sacrosanctity gave the women, "security and protection against insult on a similar basis to the tribunes."<sup>182</sup> Thus the women were protected, but more importantly, they were protected as if they held a public office.<sup>183</sup> This is not to say Octavia and Livia were tribunes, but they were *like* tribunes, in that an offense against them was an offense against the state. This elevated the two women to an equivalent of a public position. Octavian had himself been given a similar grant, of *tribunicia potestas*, in 36, something which had also been granted to his adopted father and Octavia's great-uncle Julius Caesar

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<sup>180</sup> The issue of the grant of statues will be discussed later, alongside the material culture associated with Octavia. See pg. 138, 144-147.

<sup>181</sup> See Gardner 1998, 14-22 for *tutela mulieris*.

<sup>182</sup> Translation of Dio by Bauman 1981, 167.

<sup>183</sup> Bauman 1992, 94.

in 44.<sup>184</sup> Yet, to give such a position to a woman had no precedent. Both Octavia and Livia were, as wives to the remaining triumvirs, in a position to be attacked publicly. Antony had already taken jabs at Octavian's hasty marriage to Livia (Suet. *Aug.* 69) and as Bauman writes, "Octavian knew better than anyone how injurious such attacks on a woman could be, for he had initiated them."<sup>185</sup> Thus the grant as a protective measure to ensure the women would not be publicly humiliated makes much sense. There is no record of how either of the women reacted to such an extraordinary grant.<sup>186</sup> The grant also seems to suggest an understanding of the women as part of a ruling family with Octavian at the head. The practical advantages of the grant are important, but the sacrosanctity raises Octavia and Livia above their peers, suggesting symbolic implications as well.

Yet, even Octavian could not have imagined that Antony would play into his hands so easily. As Octavia heard of Antony's Parthian campaign suffering setbacks and hardships, she wished to go to her husband with the assistance which had previously been

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<sup>184</sup> Bauman 1981 discusses these grants in detail.

<sup>185</sup> Bauman 1992, 94, alluding to Octavian's attacks on Fulvia.

<sup>186</sup> The following paragraphs in the thesis will explain how Octavian used this grant of sacrosanctity as a part of the reason to break ties with Antony at the end of the triumviral period. There are only two other recorded times in which Octavia or Livia needed personal protection. In Livia's case, some men who met Livia naked were sentenced to death for their violation of her person. She saved the offending men from this fate by remarking that to a chaste woman, naked men were the same as statues (Dio 58.2.4). In Octavia's case, her brother condemned to death a man who claimed to be the bastard son of Octavia, by attaching the offending man to the oar of a galley (Val. Max. 9.15.2). Both of these stories are years after the grant of sacrosanctity, but appear to be the only times that the punishment for violating the women's sacrosanctity was invoked. Neither of these stories seem very believable but they do show that the classical sources found the grant notable.

promised by her brother. Octavian allowed her to leave Rome, although Plutarch is careful to note that her brother did so out of the selfish desire to have a reason to go to war against Antony, on the chance that her husband would mistreat her.<sup>187</sup> Simply put, she was now protected by sacrosanctity, so to abuse Octavia was a public offense and Octavian was banking on the odds that the womanizer Antony would sooner or later mistreat his wife.<sup>188</sup> On her way to her husband, Octavia stopped in Athens where she found letters awaiting her from Antony. These letters instructed her to stay in Athens, and gave her information about his expedition. Though Octavia was upset, seeing through his pretext for keeping her at a distance, she wrote to her husband of the supplies she brought for him, and asked if he would be desirous of them. Along with clothes, pack animals, money, and gifts for his officers, Octavia also brought two thousand soldiers, handpicked and outfitted as praetorians (Plut. *Ant.* 53.1-2). Though he accepted the troops, Antony ordered Octavia to return home (Dio 49.33.4).<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Plutarch does not explicitly mention the grant of sacrosanctity in connection with Octavian's permission to Octavia, but I, following Bauman 1992, 97, believe he already saw the advantage to be gained by Antony's public mistreatment of Octavia.

<sup>188</sup> See Huzar 1978, 180-181; Pelling 1996, 36-39 for an overview of the year 35.

<sup>189</sup> Appian relates a story (*B. Civ.* 5.138) in which Sextus Pompey learned of the troops being sent to Antony by Octavia, who spent the winter in Athens. He attempted to send men to bribe these soldiers, but the governor of Macedonia, an agent of Antony, found out and stopped the emissary from Sextus Pompey, taking the gold from them and distributing the wealth to the troops in Antony's name. No other source describes these cavalry from Octavia, and it is difficult to ascertain exactly when this story is supposed to have taken place. Octavia certainly went to Athens in 35, and Sextus Pompey was at Miletus before being captured and dying in 35, so it is possible the cavalry was included in the troops Octavia was bringing to Antony.

This episode again brings to the forefront the issue of Octavia's agency. Did Octavian give her instructions on how to proceed in every possible scenario before he gave her permission to leave Rome? It seems unlikely. So why might Octavia choose to respond to Antony's slight the way she did? There is the obvious answer, that Octavia was under Antony's thrall and as such, would never dare dream to disobey his order.<sup>190</sup> While romantic, this idea also plays into the notion of Octavia's "good girl" reputation. Rather, let us analyze the situation from Octavia's point of view. If she were to disobey Antony and go to him, troops in tow, she might herself be seen as transgressive, leading military men. Octavia had seen the way Fulvia's reputation was demolished after she became overly close to Antony's soldiers, taking it upon herself to walk among them giving the watchword and ordering them about. Even bringing Antony military supplies was moving Octavia close to the edge of propriety, as Hellenistic queens and other royal women often accompanied troops, and to disobey Antony with troops in tow might have pushed her over that edge. Plutarch does mention that Octavia saw through Antony's pretext. Consider instead the diplomacy of Octavia. She had lived for almost five years as Antony's wife, and likely understood his personality, at least enough to know what might annoy or anger him. Perhaps a petulantly or defiantly worded letter would have pushed him farther away, losing any chance of a possible reunion. Again, we must force thoughts

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<sup>190</sup> Bauman 1992, 93 seems to believe this to be the case, citing "...Antony's uncanny ability to inspire Octavia with the same loyalty that he had evoked in Fulvia." Though I agree with Bauman on many other points, this is not one. This conclusion removes both Octavia's and Fulvia's agency in the space of one sentence. I have already shown that Fulvia had many reasons *of her own* to remain loyal to Antony, and I believe Octavia did also.

of the eventual end of their relationship away and focus on how Octavia might have perceived the situation at that moment. I believe that Octavia chose the course of action which was of most benefit to her. Her own personal experiences, along with her observed lessons, guided her actions, not blind loyalty.

The story follows that Cleopatra was jealous of Antony's Roman wife. The queen was fearful that Octavia's dignified character, pleasurable company, and attentiveness to Antony, backed by the power of Octavian, would overwhelm Antony and she would lose him to Octavia. Thus Cleopatra acted love-sick and unable to live without Antony, and he went to her in Alexandria (Plut. *Ant.* 53.3). While I doubt the feminine dramatics associated with Cleopatra in this story, I believe the queen's fear of Octavia's abilities were well founded. Octavia had already managed one high profile mediation between her husband and brother, there was no reason to believe she could not repeat the negotiation. Clearly Antony valued Octavia, their two children attested to this at the very least. Politically, he both needed Octavia's ships and Cleopatra's support. Antony perhaps knew that Octavia could, or would, not escort the supplies to the east if he ordered her not to. Antony might have decided it was politically expedient to tell Octavia to stay, than to draw the ire of Cleopatra by meeting his Roman wife.

Cleopatra need not resort to starvation to keep Antony near. She was a queen in her own right, she could have simply threatened to remove her monetary support without resorting to such female-specific antics.<sup>191</sup> At this moment, Antony chose to take both

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<sup>191</sup> Gruen 2003, 261 saliently notes, "Cleopatra, it should be emphasized, was a formidable figure in her own right. She possessed considerable intellectual gifts, great resourcefulness and high ambition."



Octavia's troops and Cleopatra's support. Additionally, he had no reason to believe his dalliance with Cleopatra would end any differently than his previous relationship with Glaphyra. He kept his Roman wife, Fulvia, while philandering with another elite foreign woman. Plutarch notes that Antony had a ready excuse for his womanizing ways. He, like his own progenitor Hercules, need not confine his children to a single womb. Rather, Antony would give free course to nature, as noble families should be extended and the greatness of Rome was in what was bestowed (Plut. *Ant.* 46.3-4). Also in addition to the implied pleasurable comforts of Alexandria, tactically speaking, it was easier to govern his provinces from somewhere east of Italy.<sup>192</sup>

Octavia had returned to Rome by 34, having been publicly mistreated by Antony. Upon her arrival, Octavian ordered that she return to her own home, thereby divorcing Antony, but she refused. One more, as she had in Tarentum, she entreated her brother not to make war against Antony, but instead asked Octavian to ignore Antony's treatment of her. Octavia did not want it said that the two greatest imperators in the world plunged Rome into civil war out of passion for, in Antony's case, or in defense of, in Octavian's case, a woman. So Octavia returned to Antony's home in Rome and continued to act as his wife, taking care of his *clientela* and all of his children. Plutarch writes that this wifely devotion inadvertently turned the Roman people against Antony, as they hated that Octavia was treated thusly (Plut. *Ant.* 54.1-2). One wonders how "inadvertent" Octavia's actions truly were.

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<sup>192</sup> Osgood 2006, 335-337.

It is possible that Octavia knew how her behavior would be perceived by the people of Rome. She had, at least since her marriage to Antony, been living in the public eye. The Roman household was a far less private place than we perceive it in modernity. Antony's *clientela* and friends would frequently be guests or petitioners in his home, and with Antony away campaigning, Octavia, alone in their home, would be a visible reminder of Antony's eastern proclivity. From the celebrations surrounding Antony and Octavia's marriage, it is clear the Roman people had an interest in the outcome. They had placed great hope in Octavia. Additionally, Octavia would have been aware of the implications of her sacrosanctity. If she had followed her brother's order and left Antony's home, it was possible that Octavian would have a reason to declare hostilities against Antony. Refusing to divorce her husband, in spite of her mistreatment, allowed Octavia to keep the door open for a reconciliation at a later date.

Even the people of Athens sympathized with Octavia's plight. Previously, when in Athens, it appears Antony metaphorically took to wife Athena, the goddess of the city. The elder Seneca records a story in which, on the base of one of Antony's Athenian statues, some clever Greek added a jibe about Antony and his relationship with Cleopatra. It was said that written on the statue base were the words, "Octavia and Athena to Antony: take your property" (Sen. *Suas.* 1.6). These words were the formula for divorce, making it a call for both Antony's Roman wife and Antony's divine wife to divorce him.

It is also worth noting, that despite the later Augustan propaganda, Octavia is described disobeying her brother in this episode. This may not seem like a major point, but very few women were given the ability to say no to Octavian without consequence.

Of course, it could be that Octavian wanted this picture of Octavia to enhance her reputation while damaging the reputation of her wayward husband. Again, Octavia certainly benefits from the advantage of being on what would prevail as the winning side, but I hesitate to remove all agency from her. She was a competent, astute woman. Many historians are quick to point out her brother Octavian's far-sighted vision, long term planning skills, ability to play upon the desires of the Roman people, and knack for capitalizing on opportunities.<sup>193</sup> Yet, Octavia, his older sister, historians relegate to the "devoted wife" and "good *matrona*." To my mind, Octavia appears just as capable as her lauded brother, perhaps even more successful as she remains shrouded within the stereotype of "goodness" rather than in the category of sly manipulator as Cleopatra found herself. Perhaps Octavia believed that through her graceful behavior, Antony, like the Roman people, would see his treatment of her was unworthy and return to Rome and his responsibilities. Admittedly, this is a speculative reading of the sources, but, "She [Octavia] was a not unworthy successor to Fulvia as a forerunner of (and later as a participant in) the new style of feminine politics that would later emerge in the Principate."<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, if Octavia remained married to Antony, she would retain the power and influence associated with her role as mediator between her brother and husband.

By the end of 34, Octavia, if she still held onto the hope that she might one day be reunited with Antony, likely began to understand that her opportunities were running out.

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<sup>193</sup> Syme 1939, for instance.

<sup>194</sup> Bauman 1992, 98.

Word had reached Rome of the so-called Donations of Alexandria.<sup>195</sup> After a scandalous triumph in Alexandria, scandalous because such a celebration was Roman and Antony paraded through the streets of a foreign city rather than Rome, he further offended Roman sensibilities by gifting Cleopatra and her children land and titles. While sitting on a platform with golden thrones, Antony gave Cleopatra the title Queen of Kings, along with control of Egypt, Cyprus, Libya and Coele Syria. Caesarion, the son of Cleopatra, Antony made co-ruler with Cleopatra and stated definitively that Caesarion, called Ptolemy in Egypt, was the true son of Julius Caesar. To Alexander Helios, Antony gave Armenia, Media and Parthia. To Cleopatra Selene, Antony gave the Cyrenaica in Syria. To their youngest son, Ptolemy Philadelphus, Antony gave Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia. At the ceremony, Alexander Helios was dressed in the traditional garb of a Median, which included a tiara. Additionally, he was granted a Median bodyguard. Similarly, young Ptolemy Philadelphus was dressed as a Macedonian, including a diadem, and was given a Macedonian bodyguard (Dio 49.40.3-41.4; Plut. *Ant.* 54.3-4). Most of these “donations” were in fact a public reiteration of what had already been granted to Cleopatra. And it should be remembered that other Romans who held power in the east used similar grants to client kings to ensure loyalties.<sup>196</sup> Much of this episode appears to be an exaggeration, heavily influenced by the lost *Autobiography* of Octavian.<sup>197</sup> Though

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<sup>195</sup> See Syme 1939, 259-275; Huzar 1978, 181-184 and 196-207; Pelling 1996, 39-48 for an overview of the years 34 and 33.

<sup>196</sup> Welch 2005a, generally and 190-191 specifically. Moreover the historicity of this episode has been greatly questioned. See following footnote as well as Syme 1939, 270; Pelling 1988, 249-252 n. 54.4-9.

<sup>197</sup> Osgood 2006, 338-349.

Octavia and her brother were aware of this episode which took place in 34, Octavian did not begin to use the “donations” in his propaganda against Antony until 32. Again it is difficult to decipher how Octavia digested this information. Clearly it was not enough to drive her to divorce him. She was not inexperienced with the frequent extramarital relationships of Roman men. Both her great-uncle Julius Caesar and her brother Octavian were frequently suggested to be less than loyal to their wives (Suet. *Iul.* 50-52 for Julius Caesar; Suet. *Aug.* 69 for Octavian). Practically, she was likely too busy running Antony’s household and caring for their children to be bothered by these “donations” which, other than the dramatic presentation and Cleopatra’s gender, did not stray far from the way other Romans dealt with client kings and kingdoms.

Throughout 33, Antony and Octavian hurled public insults at one another, and each continued with their planned military campaigns. Octavian made easy war in Illyricum, returning Gabinius’ lost eagles and returning triumphant to Rome. Antony planned another Parthian campaign with Artavasdes of Media, engaging Alexander Helios to Artavasdes’ daughter Iotape. Additionally, the second term of the triumvirate, renewed at Tarentum, expired on the last day of 33. Antony appeared unperturbed by the legal ending of the triumvirate, spending the winter in Ephesus with Cleopatra.

In the next year, 32, both men began to prepare for some type of confrontation. In many ways it was not so different than 40, before the pact at Brundisium or 37, prior to the treaty at Tarentum. The relationship between the two men was strained as it had been many times before, yet this time proved Octavian was finished with negotiations. Through Antony appeared to come to this realization later than Octavian, he too began to

prepare for a military showdown. Initially, Antony still had a strong foothold in Rome. The consuls of the year, Sosius and Domitius Ahenobarbus, were Antonine men. It should be remembered that to most Romans, Antony still appeared to be the stronger of the two men, both in support by senators and militarily.<sup>198</sup> The consuls first attempted a tactful angle, bringing Antony's *acta* to the senate to be ratified, though legally the support of the senate was not necessary. Soon, their approach changed and Sosius openly attacked Octavian. Though he waited a few weeks to respond, Octavian did so with a show of strength. Accompanied by armed guards, Octavian, though legally not a triumvir any longer, sat in the chair between the consuls. This brash assumption of power was enough to send both consuls running to Antony at Ephesus, accompanied by a number of senators. Their flight allowed Octavian to push his propaganda further than before. This was going to be a civil war for control of Rome between Octavian and Antony, but Octavian managed to transform it into a war of Roman national interest.

Antony moved his headquarters from Ephesus, then Samos, before settling into Athens. Here he was forced to make a decision. As it was becoming clear that a military showdown between Antony and Octavian was approaching, Antony could not remain married to Octavian's sister. Antony officially divorced Octavia in 32 by sending notice to Rome (Dio 50.3.2; Livy *Per.* 132). Along with this notice, Antony sent men to Rome with orders to physically remove Octavia from his home. Plutarch dramatically describes that Octavia obeyed, crying distressed tears, as she worried that she would be considered

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<sup>198</sup> See Huzar 1978, 207-216; Pelling 1996, 48-54; Osgood 2006, 350-372 for an overview of the year 32.

one of the causes of war. She took all of her children, as well as all of his children, except Antyllus who was already with Antony in the east. All Romans pitied, not the dignified Octavia, but rather, Antony. For everyone knew that Cleopatra was no match for Octavia in youthfulness or beauty (Plut. *Ant.* 57.2-3).

It is difficult to see through Augustan propaganda. Is this episode by Plutarch a dramatic reconstruction? Probably. Did Octavia make this tearful speech? Her words, as reported by Plutarch, perfectly supported the propaganda her brother Octavian was using to turn Romans against Antony, as offending Octavia was an offense to Rome since she had been given sacrosanctity in 35.<sup>199</sup> The brewing war between Octavian and Antony was in fact a civil war, but Octavian was packaging it as a showdown between west and east, between Rome and Cleopatra. The Egyptian queen had overwhelmed Antony with her decadent eastern ways, and Antony was her emasculated slave. The wayward Roman had been seduced by the Hellenistic lifestyle Cleopatra espoused. Though perhaps some of these accusations had a small grain of truth at their base, Octavian enlarged them to be the cause of the conflict between the once-triumvirs. The fact of the matter was Octavian needed a cause that was not civil war to rally the support of Italy behind him, and Antony's actions provided him the perfect propaganda weapon.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Octavian would expound upon Antony's offenses in a speech Dio has him deliver just before the Battle of Actium. Octavian claims to have been devoted to Antony, so much so that he gave Octavia in marriage to him. Octavian goes on to claim that his affection was so great that he could ignore the first offenses Antony gave to Octavia (Dio 50.26). The later Augustan propaganda can be seen here in Dio, as it is clear that Octavian did indeed use Octavia's mistreatment to turn the Roman people against Antony.

<sup>200</sup> Many secondary sources discuss Octavian's wildly successful use of propaganda. See Syme 1939, 276-293; Huzar 1978, 183-196; Zanker 1988, 57-65; Pelling 1996, 50-54; Osgood 2006, 352-356 to name a few.

Octavia's thoughts on the matter of her divorce are frustratingly unknown. Were these tears false, a mere façade to show herself to Rome as a dignified *matrona* wronged by her Egyptian counterpart? It is impossible to know. The fact that Octavia took Antony's younger son by Fulvia, Iullus, with her perhaps speaks to her thoughts at the time. There would have been other Antonine relations in Rome able to take charge of the boy, now around thirteen years old. Or, he could have left Italy with the consuls and senators that fled to Antony. Her choice to keep Iullus could be selfish, of course. The boy might be a valuable hostage later on if needed, though that level of cruelty on the part of Octavia does not seem to fit with her personality. As I have alluded to, I believe Octavia to be astute but not callous or diabolical, especially as it pertained to children. Octavia's decision to continue to care for Iullus should, to my mind, be seen as genuine concern. Similarly, I believe the tears shed at her divorce were likely also sincere.

Antony's notification of divorce meant that the great hope placed in Octavia's marriage had come to naught. All the effort and time she invested in negotiating between her husband and brother were now shown to be wasted. As discussed, it is unlikely Octavia had imagined her marriage doomed from the start. Her mediation at Tarentum and constant work on Antony's behalf show her investment in the belief that she could assist Rome in avoiding more civil bloodshed by negotiating the relationship between Antony and Octavian. She handled the constant slights from Antony with grace, yes, but that does not mean she enjoyed the persistent bombardment by news of her husband's marital infidelities. Marriage in Rome was not expected to be filled with romance but



*concordia* and mutual respect were held as the ideal, and Octavia had not been able to hold onto either with Antony.

As part of his campaign to turn the Roman people against Antony, Octavian procured and read Antony's will. This was illegal, to read the will of a living Roman, but that did not stop Octavian. He took the will from the care of the Vestal Virgins and disclosed the contents to the senate. The will stated that Antony wished to be buried, even if he died in Rome, with Cleopatra (Plut. *Ant.* 58.3-5). He also gave vast gifts to his children by Cleopatra, while ignoring his Roman offspring (Dio 50.3.3-5). There is much reason to doubt the authenticity of Antony's will, but it certainly achieved Octavian's desired goal.<sup>201</sup> Antony was stripped of his consulship in the next year and all other official power he might still hold. His offenses against Octavia and Rome were now too great. War was declared indirectly on Antony through Cleopatra.

The next year, 31, saw the final defeat of Antony and Cleopatra. Though Antony may have held military superiority in numbers, he was unable to bring that superiority to bear. Octavian controlled Italy. This meant that Antony could not invade for political reasons, as it would seem that he was invading Italy with a foreign army. Nor could he invade for military reasons, as Octavian controlled the major ports such as Brundisium and Tarentum. Thus, Antony would have to wait for Octavian to come to him. Agrippa, Octavian's formidable general, struck early in the season and gave Octavian's forces the opportunity and momentum needed to gain the upper hand. As the tide of war began to

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<sup>201</sup> Pelling 2006, 52 suggests Octavian could have written it himself, while Osgood 2006, 353-354 n. 13 suggests that while Octavian likely misrepresented Antony's will, there is no "intrinsic" reason to doubt it.

favor Octavian, many of Antony's generals defected, such as the historian Dellius who took with him Antony's battle plans. As Antony's options for a land battle were spent, he looked to break out of the blockade by which Agrippa had him penned in. At Actium, Antony looked to escape with what troops and supplies as he could to regroup. When his bewildered troops saw Antony and Cleopatra sailing away, they saw little reason to fight and most of his abandoned troops went over to Octavian. Though it would go down in history as a decisive battle, the end of Antony's chances to best Octavian, the Battle of Actium in September of 31 was rather tame.<sup>202</sup>

The flight of Antony and Cleopatra meant that Octavian had to pursue them to Alexandria, although he did so with no great haste. The victor first had to handle the massive amount of troops he had on his hands, and he sent Agrippa back to Italy so that his trusted general could deal with any issues stirring there. Octavian did not reach Alexandria until July of 30. After a short battle, on August 1<sup>st</sup>, Alexandria fell to Octavian. Shakespeare, following Plutarch, tells the story of Antony's bungled suicide, after his slave refused to kill his master and killed himself instead. Cleopatra sent for the bleeding, but not yet dead, Antony to be brought to her within the mausoleum in which the queen had barricaded herself. She and her maids hoisted him up the wall and lowered him into the tomb with them, where he would finally meet his end (Plut, *Ant.* 76.3-77).<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> My description of the Battle of Actium is necessarily truncated. For longer discussions, see Syme 1939, 294-298; Huzar 1978, 216-232; Pelling 1996, 54-59; Osgood 2006, 372-384 and Lange 2011, who offers both an overview of previous discussions, and a new reconsideration.

<sup>203</sup> Other classical sources also speak of Antony's death, but not with the detail of Plutarch. See Vell. Pat. 2.72; Flor. 2.9-11; Dio 51.10.7-11.1.

Cleopatra too would die within her mausoleum, from the legendary bit of the asp.<sup>204</sup>

Octavian treated Cleopatra's children by Antony with some kindness, sparing them the same fate as their mother. The victor had been robbed of the spectacle of marching Cleopatra in chains through the city of Rome by her suicide. Octavian would keep her children alive for use in his triumph instead.<sup>205</sup> Antony's oldest son by Fulvia, his heir Antyllus, would be killed quickly, betrayed by his tutor and beheaded (Plut. *Ant.* 81.1). Cleopatra had sent her son by Caesar, Caesarion, away from Egypt but in the end it did not save him. This young man was also betrayed by his tutor and killed (Plut. *Ant.* 81.2-82.1).

Octavian returned to Rome in 29 to celebrate his triple triumph: for his victory over Illyricum in 33, his victory at the battle of Actium in 31, and finally for his victory over Cleopatra in 30.<sup>206</sup> He brought Antony's children by Cleopatra with him. After Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios were paraded through the streets in Octavian's triumph with an effigy of their dead mother (Dio 51.21.8), they, along with their younger

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<sup>204</sup> While their dramatic stories are fascinating, the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra are abbreviated here as they do not contribute to Octavia's story. For further discussion, see Huzar 1978, 226-232; Pelling 1996, 59-65. For an overview of the primary sources which detail Cleopatra's death, see Jones 2006, 180-204; Roller 2010, 129-150.

<sup>205</sup> Of Cleopatra's children, only her daughter Cleopatra Selene would survive and live a full adult life. The fate of Cleopatra's children will be discussed more fully below, with Octavia's children and Iullus.

<sup>206</sup> See Vell. Pat. 2.89.1-4; Livy *Per.* 133; Oros. 6.20.1; Suet. *Aug.* 22; Dio 51.19.1-20.4 and 51.21.5-22.9 for classical descriptions of the triumphs celebrated by Octavian. See Lange 2009, 79-90; Lange 2013, 82-86 for more detailed analysis at the multiple triumphs Octavian celebrated on his return to Rome. See Syme 1939, 298-312; Osgood 2006, 384-403 for the aftermath of Actium and the celebrations which followed.

brother Ptolemy Philadelphus, were put into Octavia's care.<sup>207</sup> Indeed, she reared all of Antony's children, save the dead Antyllus (Plut. *Ant.* 87).<sup>208</sup> Octavia did not and could not publicly mourn the death of Antony, as he had divorced her a year before his death. At first glance the addition of his other children, by other women, into Octavia's household had the potential to be a cruel reminder of everything that she had lost. Yet, her continuing care of Antony's children seems to indicate that she did not hold a grudge against her former husband, at least not a grudge she was willing to loose upon children. Additionally, Octavia, now around 37 years old, never remarried. There is no explanation in the classical sources as to why she chose to remain unmarried for the rest of her life. Perhaps she had wearied of the life of a political pawn and refused to remarry, she had previously declined to obey an order of her brother's after all. Or perhaps Octavian thought her too valuable. To give his treasured sister in marriage was to bestow great favor upon whomever she might marry and it is very possible that this level of favor would elevate Octavia's husband too high for Octavian's liking.

After the defeat and deaths of Cleopatra and Antony, Octavia never regained the same level of public exposure she had enjoyed during her marriage to Antony. This should not be seen as a diminishment of her influence, but rather a change in the type of power Octavia could exert. She was no longer to be a "good wife" making graceful

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<sup>207</sup> See Harders 2009 for an discussion of Octavian as stand in step-father for Antony's children.

<sup>208</sup> It is interesting to note that later both Livia and Antonia Minor would also take charge of children who were not their own. Livia raised M. Salvius Otho in her house, while Antonia Minor cared for the son of Berenice, Agrippa, a Judean prince, alongside her son Claudius. Fischler 1994, 123-124.

speeches and playing the negotiator in the public eye, but rather she moved to her next role as “good mother,” retiring to her private world. Octavia was now in charge of nine children, the oldest of which, Iullus, was around 15. Instead of indirectly influencing Roman politics through her husband, she could now turn her attention to raising “good” sons and daughters through which she might later gain influence. It is clear she cared about the education of her children, as it is recorded that she hired Nestor of Tarsus, an Academician, to tutor Marcellus (Strabo 14.5.14). Though Strabo mentions only Marcellus as the recipient of Nestor’s tutelage, he could very well have been educating the other children in her home, or they could have been given tutors of their own.

There is no way to know how Octavia felt about her retirement from the main stage of Roman public life, but it seems likely she took the reshaping of her life in stride. Octavia, as a Roman woman, would have always understood the importance of her role as mother and she appears to embrace this role for the rest of her life.<sup>209</sup> But before moving to Octavia’s time as the beloved sister of Octavian and gracious mother of nine, this paper will turn briefly to Cleopatra. While this is a small step back chronologically, it is important to acknowledge the connections between the last two women of Antony’s life. Cleopatra, like Octavia, embraced her status as mother. Though the two women were in constant competition in the eyes of Romans, Octavia and Cleopatra had much in common.

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<sup>209</sup> The remainder of Octavia’s life as a mother will be discussed below. See pg. 129-153.

## Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt

Unlike Octavia's personal experience with Fulvia, it is not known specifically through our classical sources if Octavia and Cleopatra ever met in person.<sup>210</sup> The androcentric focus of our sources means they would have cared little about such an interview, yet, the opportunity was available. I would like to postulate the possibility of the two women meeting in Rome during Cleopatra's visit to the city in 46. As mentioned earlier in passing, Julius Caesar went to Egypt in 48 to pursue the fleeing Pompey. He found his adversary beheaded when he arrived to Alexandria in October. Cleopatra herself had suffered hardships in the spring of the same year, before Julius Caesar arrived, when she was driven out of her capital into exile. The arrival of Julius Caesar in late 48 presented her with an opportunity, and the infamous episode in which Cleopatra revealed herself to the Roman general, freshly rolled from a carpet, was born. This story, while dramatic, is very likely untrue. Plutarch, the only classical source for the episode, does not in fact mention the fabled carpet, but rather writes that Cleopatra was rolled in στρωματόδεσμον, or bedclothes (Plut. *Caes.* 49.1).<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Cleopatra VII, Queen of Egypt, is one of history's most famous individuals and as such, there are many works, both scholarly and popular, about the famous queen. This thesis does not seek to dive into her extensive historiography. To begin, Jones 2006 is an excellent sourcebook for the mentions of Cleopatra in the classical sources. For an academically focused biography, see Roller 2010. Though Schiff 2010 is not written by a historian, but rather by a biographer, it is a worthwhile study and indeed, won the Pulitzer Prize. The 2011 collection on Cleopatra, edited by Miles, is a good beginning for anyone looking to learn more about this multifaceted and often misunderstood queen.

<sup>211</sup> Gruen 2003, 264-265.

Regardless of the manner of her arrival, Cleopatra was able to secure Julius Caesar's support. Similar to the endorsement of her rule and gifts Antony would make in the mid 30s, Julius Caesar endorsed Cleopatra's rule and awarded Cleopatra's younger siblings the island of Cyprus.<sup>212</sup> Yet, this gesture could not hold off the brewing Egyptian civil war, and Julius Caesar was embroiled in a war in the streets of Alexandria. He was eventually victorious and Cleopatra was installed as the rightful queen of Egypt.<sup>213</sup> After their now famous cruise up the Nile (App. *B. Civ.* 2.90; Suet. *Iul.* 52.1), Julius Caesar departed to Rome in the summer of 47 and celebrated four triumphs in the autumn of 46, for his victories in Gaul, Egypt, Pontus, and Africa.<sup>214</sup>

In 46 also, Cleopatra would travel to Rome with her husband-brother Ptolemy XIV. Upon arrival, they would be housed in Julius Caesar's estate. Additionally, Julius Caesar would enroll the Egyptian king and queen as "friends and allies" of Rome (Dio 43.27.3).<sup>215</sup> The housing of Cleopatra in Julius Caesar's estate was not the sexual scandal it implied. Foreign dignitaries were often lodged with elite Romans, as befitted their status. Furthermore, Julius Caesar left Rome for Spain soon after Cleopatra's arrival and was even said to have engaged in an affair with Eunoe, queen of Mauretania, while he

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<sup>212</sup> Gruen 2003, 266.

<sup>213</sup> See Graindor 1931 for a full discussion of the Alexandrian war.

<sup>214</sup> For primary sources descriptions of these triumphs see App. *B. Civ.* 2.101-102; Dio 43.14.3 and 43.19; Flor. 2.13.88-89; Livy *Per.* 115; Suet. *Iul.* 37 and 54.3; Plut. *Caes.* 55; Vell. Pat. 2.56.1-2.

<sup>215</sup> Dio also notes that this housing situation incurred displeasure upon Julius Caesar, but I, following Gruen 2003, 267 believe this "displeasure" is a later construction, colored by anti-Cleopatra propaganda.

was in Spain (Suet. *Iul.* 52.1).<sup>216</sup> It is during Cleopatra's time in Rome, that I speculate that it is possible that Octavia could have met the newly reinstated queen of Egypt.<sup>217</sup>

In 46, Octavia would have been in Rome with her husband Gaius Marcellus. Indeed, it was upon her great-uncle's return to celebrate his quadruple triumph that Gaius Marcellus, with the senate's assistance, was able to secure the pardon of his cousin, M. Marcellus.<sup>218</sup> If Julius Caesar was hosting the queen of Egypt in his home as a diplomatic guest, there were likely social engagements accompanying her visit. As previously mentioned, Roman dining was co-ed, and since one of the diplomatic guests was a woman, it is likely other Roman women would have attended any social gatherings Julius Caesar arranged in his home. Octavia was one of Julius Caesar's closest female relations, and would have been around twenty at the time of Cleopatra's visit in 46. The young queen of Egypt was only three years Octavia's senior, and thus Octavia would have made an age appropriate dinner companion. Also, though Cleopatra spoke many languages, she did not speak Latin.<sup>219</sup> Octavia, as an educated elite woman, would have been able to

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<sup>216</sup> Gruen 2003, 268.

<sup>217</sup> Gruen 2003 convincingly argues that Cleopatra did not only visit Rome once for an extended period of time. He suggests instead that the queen visited once in 46 for confirmation as friend and ally. She then was sent back to Egypt by Julius Caesar (Suet. *Iul.* 52.1). She returned in late 45 or early 44, as it is known Cleopatra was present at Rome in 44, and she is described as fleeing in the aftermath of the Ides of March.

<sup>218</sup> See pg. 37-38 above on M. Marcellus.

<sup>219</sup> See Plut. *Ant.* 27.3-5 for the languages attributed to Cleopatra. Gruen 2003, 261 saliently notes that Latin is not among these languages.



speaking with the queen in Greek, again contributing to her suitability as a dinner companion to the queen of Egypt.<sup>220</sup>

Unfortunately, this remains a speculation but, I believe, an educated speculation. There is one more minor detail in Plutarch that could add substance to this postulation. Following the death of Antony, Octavian went to speak to Cleopatra within her mausoleum. During this conversation, Cleopatra explained that she had held back some of her female adornments, not for herself, but for Octavia and Livia, so that they might intercede on her behalf (Plut. *Ant.* 83). To my mind, the inclusion of Octavia by the queen is odd. Livia, as Octavian's wife, and thus his closest female relation makes sense. If Livia had hypothetically visited Cleopatra at any time, she would likely have brought the queen gifts, as they were each other's social equivalent. Yet, why would Cleopatra believe that Octavia might assist her? For most of the mid to late 30s, Cleopatra was Octavia's direct rival. The two women both bore Antony children, and Cleopatra actively sought to keep Antony from returning to his Roman wife.<sup>221</sup> Consider instead the possibility that Cleopatra and Octavia had met in Rome in 46, and maybe even in 44 during the queen's second visit. Cleopatra might seek to remind Octavia of their fleeting familiarity, in addition to attempting to elicit sympathy for the parallel course their lives had taken. Neither woman was naïve to the world they lived in. The acumen both women

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<sup>220</sup> Octavia's language skills are not remarked upon by any classical authors, but as mentioned earlier the fact that she built a library with Greek and Latin sections, she likely knew both languages. See pg. 166-172 on Octavia's portico and library. Additionally, her extended stay in Athens in the early 30s also seems to imply she could converse in Greek.

<sup>221</sup> In this context, Cleopatra's fear of Octavia's influence over Antony is even more warranted. If Cleopatra had met Octavia, had been familiar with her rival's beauty and acumen, she would have known exactly how dangerous Octavia's grace could be.

exhibited in their lives meant they fully understood the role of women, and how to exert their agency, within their respective cultures.

Cleopatra's death forestalled any further communication between the two women. Again, the idea that Cleopatra and Octavia had some personal familiarity with each other is tantalizing in connection with Octavia's decision to raise Cleopatra's children. And not only raise, but actively seek to advance their lives, as seen in the marriage of Cleopatra Selene to Juba II.<sup>222</sup> Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to elucidate the notion that Octavia was not merely "good," but rather, able. This should not be understood as an attempt to prove that she could not be both. Octavia cared for and raised the children of Antony by both Fulvia *and* Cleopatra, two women with radically different reputations as herself. As I argued above in the section about Fulvia, Octavia would have been aware of all of Fulvia's successes and failures, as well as known Fulvia personally through social contact. Octavia's acceptance of Fulvia's children and later promotion of Iullus should perhaps be seen as a kindness. Octavia knew exactly how difficult a situation prominent women could find themselves in, and it is possible her decision to care for Fulvia's children was a reaction to this understanding. Similarly, though Cleopatra was her rival for Antony's attentions, it is possible Octavia empathized with the situation of which Cleopatra was a victim. Octavia could not help Cleopatra, and maybe she would not want to, but she could care for the children who had the misfortune to be born on the losing side of the war. I reiterate that the preceding paragraphs are speculation, but to my mind,

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<sup>222</sup> Octavia's influence on Cleopatra Selene's life will be discussed further below, with Octavia's other children. See pg. 153.

the possibility that Cleopatra and Octavia met is far from impossible. And further, even a passing personal knowledge of one another would complement much of the written historical record about both Cleopatra and Octavia.

The propaganda campaign by Octavian through the mid to late 30s cast Octavia as the proper Roman wife of Antony in comparison to the mannish, decadent Egyptian queen Cleopatra. Interestingly, in her own kingdom of Egypt, Cleopatra was honored as a proper Egyptian mother and queen. Octavian needed to distance Cleopatra from her image as mother in his efforts to demonize the queen as a rallying point for a foreign war as a façade to cover his true intention of pursuing a civil war against Antony. Motherhood as a virtue was an ideal which Romans would recognize, thus Octavian's propaganda strongly pushed the gender inversion of Cleopatra and Antony: she was the mannish master in their relationship, while Antony was cast as the effeminate subservient partner.<sup>223</sup>

This Augustan propaganda was strong enough to persist in the written record, as we have previously discussed with Fulvia. Plutarch, when describing Fulvia, noted that she was not a woman interested in spinning, but instead wanted to rule a ruler. Further, the biographer suggests that Cleopatra owed Fulvia a "tutor's fee" for teaching him to obey the commands of a woman (Plut. *Ant.* 10.5-6). The poet Horace, in his *Odes*, wrote that Cleopatra was not a woman to shy away from the sword (Hor. *Odes* 1.37.21-24), a similar sentiment, as discussed earlier, was hurled at Fulvia as well. It is salient to

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<sup>223</sup> Jones 2012, 173-174. See also Russell 1998 which explores the emasculation of Antony through Plutarch and other written sources.

consider that neither Fulvia nor Cleopatra were “bad” in regard to the traditional values associated with women. They were both fertile, devoted mothers: Fulvia produced four sons as well as a daughter, while Cleopatra produced three sons as well as a daughter.<sup>224</sup> This forced the propaganda by Octavian to subvert the feminine aspects of both women to recast them as “bad women.”

Octavia did not need to change her behavior to assist in being the propagandistic foil Cleopatra. Indeed, Octavia, simply by being Roman stood as the “good woman” to Cleopatra’s image as a “bad woman.” Even when Octavia took the initiative to go to her brother ahead of Antony and Octavian’s meeting at Tarentum in 37, she was following the example of historic Roman women, not acting outside a traditionally gender-accepted role as negotiator. It should be noticed that Octavia, like Cleopatra, often wept tears when confronted with unwanted circumstances. Yet even their tears are classified in the categories of “good woman” and “bad woman.” Octavia’s tears were described as graceful, shed as she was forced from her husband’s home into a divorce she never desired. Cleopatra’s tears, on the other hand, were depicted as manipulative and used not to show mistreatment, but to convince Antony not to leave.

Fulvia rose to prominence before Octavia’s entrance onto the main stage of Roman public life. Though the two women co-existed during the proscriptions, Octavia had yet to become a major player, meaning Octavia could learn from her observations of

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<sup>224</sup> As a brief reminder, Fulvia birthed a son and daughter to her first husband, Clodius (n. 76), a son to her second husband, Curio (n. 82), in addition to her two sons by Antony. Cleopatra birthed a son to Julius Caesar, and two sons and a daughter to Antony.

and experience with Fulvia. Additionally, it was mostly after Fulvia died that Octavia was placed in the role of anti-Fulvia.<sup>225</sup> Octavia was supposed to be the corrective wife to Antony, while Fulvia had been the corruption from which he needed to be rehabilitated.

Cleopatra shared the main stage with Octavia. Though they were rivals in Octavian's propaganda, analogously to Fulvia and Octavia, Cleopatra and Octavia were more similar than different. Both women were devoted mothers whose behavior sought to epitomize the female ideals of their countries and cultures. Cleopatra, a Ptolemy whose family had ruled Egypt for centuries, looked to model her behavior after the goddess Isis, while using motherhood as a way to prove the legitimacy of her rule.<sup>226</sup> Octavia, as previously discussed, exemplified the traditional ideal of a Roman *matrona*, as well as exhibited the traits attributed to the Roman historical examples of the Sabine women and Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi.<sup>227</sup> Cleopatra had the misfortune of choosing to support Antony, the eventual loser in the battle for supremacy in the Roman world and thus her reputation suffered greatly at the hands of centuries of Augustan propaganda. Yet, Octavian learned much from the Egyptian queen.<sup>228</sup>

The next chapter will consider Octavia's life after marriage. By the time Antony divorced her in 32, Octavia had been married, almost continuously, for around twenty-two years. Taking into consideration Octavia's reevaluated birth year of 66, she would

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<sup>225</sup> The episode with Hortensia and the other *matrona* of Rome are the exception to this statement.

<sup>226</sup> Jones 2012, 165-172.

<sup>227</sup> Jones 2012, 172-173. Cornelia will be discussed further below, with the material culture associated with Octavia.

<sup>228</sup> Kleiner 2005 fully explores the connections between Cleopatra and Rome. Wyke 2009 looks at images of Cleopatra during the time of Octavian.

have been thirty-four when Antony divorced her. Widowed, then divorced, Octavia found herself in 29 the mother of nine children with a brother who was now the uncontested leading man of Rome. Though Octavia was not needed as the public face of Octavian's propaganda campaign any longer, she continued to assist her brother in his attempt to reshape the Roman world.

## CHAPTER THREE: Motherhood and Memory

### Octavian, cos. 43, 33, 31-23, princeps

Octavia's brother Octavian has been spoken of throughout this thesis, but this section will turn to him specifically in the years following Actium to examine, as far as possible, the sibling relationship that existed between brother and sister.<sup>229</sup> After the death of Antony, Octavia is once again relegated to the background in the written sources, but her presence can be felt in regards to the public actions and marriages of her children.<sup>230</sup> The following section will focus on Octavia in connection with her brother, and as such, much of the political history of these years will be omitted. Throughout, it is important to remember that Octavian was experimenting with exactly how he would continue to hold on to the power he now possessed. In his adopted father Julius Caesar, Octavian had a cautionary tale of the dangers that could face a leading man in Rome. Thus, while often historians portray the principate as a smooth transition from republic to empire, it should instead be considered a time of innovations, some of which would remain and some of which would quietly fade away.<sup>231</sup> Rather than describe Octavian's

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<sup>229</sup> The bibliography of Octavian/Augustus is vast. For an entry into the cultural implications of the Augustan Age, see Galinsky 1996. Galinsky 2005a is an excellent collection of articles that can serve as an introduction to the vast scholarship on the Age of Augustus. For a popular biographical entry into Octavian's life, see Everitt 2006. For a scholarly look at the image of Augustus, see Levick 2010.

<sup>230</sup> This section will focus on the written sources which evidence Octavia's role in events until her death. The material culture created by and for Octavia will be discussed later.

<sup>231</sup> Crook 1996 is an excellent resource for this time. As he states on 70, "...the danger of succumbing to the thematic temptation is that it makes the institutions he initiated look too much like the product of deliberation and the drawing-board, whereas they need to be seen as arising, incomplete and tentative, out of the vicissitudes of a continuing political

actions, which has been done many times over in great detail, I will focus here on how Octavia assisted her brother during this transitional time.

A quick reminder of Octavia's previous assistance to her brother is in order. When Octavian was newly arrived to Rome in 44, Cicero mentioned how the young man became close with Gaius Marcellus, Octavia's first husband.<sup>232</sup> This closeness was, at least in part, Octavia's doing. Other than their mother and step-father, Octavia was Octavian's closest relation in Italy. Additionally, she would have been well-versed in the political and social situation of the time, and thus a valuable resource for her newly arrived brother. Later, during the proscriptions of the late 40s, Octavia acted to aid her brother during the episode with Hortensia as well as when she assisted in sparing the life of the husband of Tanusia.<sup>233</sup> Octavia displayed her loyalty to Octavian, while still remaining an ally to other *matrona* in need of help. Then, while married to Antony, her brother's greatest and most dangerous rival, Octavia played the diplomat and negotiated between the men.<sup>234</sup> Throughout the 30s, Octavia, while playing a major role in the political intrigue of the day, remained dutiful to both her husband and brother. In three major episodes, Octavia is shown as displaying proper *pietas*, to husband, and lacking a father, to her brother. She stayed loyal to both men while serving, in the larger picture,

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story." Severy 2003, 33-61 also examines this time, on 33, "...as a series of attempts to understand, define, and present his relationship with the state."

<sup>232</sup> See pg. 39-40.

<sup>233</sup> See pg. 67-68.

<sup>234</sup> See pg. 95-99.



the interests of Rome. She continued to be a fine example of a Republican *matrona*, even while Republican ideals crumbled around her.<sup>235</sup>

A new chapter in the life of Octavia began with the death of Antony and Cleopatra. The main thrust of the propaganda of her brother toward Antony and Cleopatra almost guaranteed that Octavia would have to somewhat withdraw from the public eye. Octavian had put forward the idea that Antony had been dominated by an eastern woman, thus he could not, in the years immediately following Actium, allow the women of his family a prominent, public role. His propaganda had decried Antony's behavior as distinctly anti-Roman, thus if he wished to claim he was restoring Rome to Republican ideas, women would once again need to occupy their rightful place in the background.<sup>236</sup> There could be no Fulvia in the wake of Actium. Octavia, already the anti-Fulvia, was a prime candidate to fill this female requirement. Her actions in the 30s had been in response to a civil crisis, a war of Roman ideals against foreign influence. Octavia needed to return to the private sphere to show the public that Rome was returning to its traditional norms. Thus, Octavia would not dominate the public arena as she had during the 30s, but she was present none-the-less.

It is crucial to understand that Octavia's relative absence in the written sources does not mean that she retired from public life or that her influence declined, but rather that she, and Octavian, were attempting to return a sense of "normality" to Rome. As this thesis has discussed previously, Republican women were far from powerless, but their

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<sup>235</sup> See Severy 2003, 7-32 for an excellent overview of the family and their relation to the state in the late republic.

<sup>236</sup> Severy 2003, 4.

influence was considered indirect, in that they were not present in the foreground of the political institutions of Rome. Cicero's letters to and about Terentia and other Republican matrons as well as Fulvia's early career show that women during the late Republic were far from meek or relegated to the private realm, yet they remained in the background of the written record. As such we had to strain to see, in their passing mentions, the type of influence women could exert. This is the *exemplum* Octavian, and Octavia, sought to return to. Not the complete absence of women, but a return to the "normality" of women indirectly influencing the nodes of Republican power. The memory of Cleopatra and the dangers of female dominance were too near in the minds of the Roman people for Octavian's female relations to dominate the public, political sphere; thus Octavia and other women, at least temporarily, recede from the written record which was androcentrically created, focused on the deeds of military and political men.<sup>237</sup>

During the aforementioned triumphs in 29 celebrated by Octavian following his return to Rome after the battle of Actium, Octavia's son Marcellus made his public debut riding the right trace horse which was drawing Octavian's chariot through the streets. His cousin, Livia's son Tiberius rode the left trace horse (Suet. *Tib.* 6.4). Both boys had been born in 42, making them just thirteen when they received the honor of riding alongside the victor of Actium. Preference was given to Marcellus, riding on the right. It is unclear if Octavia would have been the one to suggest this honor to her brother. As a triumph was a military, and thus male-focused celebration, Octavia may not have had any input in the

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<sup>237</sup> The punishment of Julia, Livia's later life, and the lives of Octavia, Julia, and Livia's female descendants show that this ebb from the written record proved to be only temporary.

planning of such an occasion. As a mother, she was likely pleased to see her son honored thusly even if she had no direct hand in it's arrangement. The privilege given to Marcellus marked him as important to his uncle. Marcellus was, after all, Octavian's closest male blood relation.

The next year, 28, saw Octavia's eldest daughter, Marcella Major, married to Octavian's favorite general and friend, Agrippa who divorced his current wife to marry Octavia's daughter (Dio 53.1.2). Previously, Agrippa had been married to Atticus' daughter Caecilia, by whom he had a daughter, Vipsania Agrippina (Nep. *Att.* 19.4).<sup>238</sup> For Agrippa, this marriage to Octavia's daughter would be marrying up. Though Atticus was well respected, he, and so his daughter also, was of equestrian status. Marcella Major was the daughter of Gaius Marcellus, a *nobile*. Additionally, a marriage to Octavian's niece would bring Agrippa into Octavian's own family. Unlike the honor given to Marcellus the year before, Octavia very likely had a hand in the marriage of her daughter. Marcella Major had no living father or step-father to arrange a marriage for her, and so that responsibility would have fallen to her mother.<sup>239</sup> Surely, Octavian also would have been consulted in this decision, both because Marcella Major, his niece, was a close blood relation and because Agrippa was his friend, advisor, and confidant. As Marcella Major's birth year is unknown, we must speculate on how old she was at the time of her

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<sup>238</sup> Atticus has been mentioned before in this thesis as one of the favored correspondents of Cicero, as well as the man who assisted Fulvia in 43 when Antony had been declared *hostis*, pg. 59-60 and n. 106.

<sup>239</sup> See Dixon 1983, 104; Dixon 1985; Corbier 1991c; Treggiari 1991a, 83-160; Dixon 2011.

first marriage. She was likely married between the ages of twelve to fifteen, like most elite Roman girls at their first marriage.<sup>240</sup> Her husband Agrippa was probably around 35 at the time, almost the same age as her uncle Octavian.<sup>241</sup> This marriage bound the loyal Agrippa even tighter to Octavian. Octavia too was probably close to Agrippa. He had been a friend to Octavian even before Octavian had been adopted by his great-uncle Julius Caesar (Suet. *Aug.* 93.12), and it was Agrippa, along with Maecenas, who needed to be convinced of Antony's intentions by Octavia at Tarentum. Additionally, Agrippa, like Octavia herself, was unfailingly loyal to Octavian (Dio 54.29). Thus, now that Octavian was the leading man in Rome, Agrippa was rewarded for this devotion by both Octavia and Octavian.<sup>242</sup>

A brief look at the political events of 27 are needed. The year began with Octavian and Agrippa as co-consuls, and on the Ides of January, Octavian made a show of giving all the power he possessed back to the Senate and the people. In response, the senate granted Octavian a "province." This *provincia* was to include Spain, Gaul, Syria, and Egypt a grant far larger than any given before and on a ten year tenure. Thus, though

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<sup>240</sup> This means we should postulate Marcella Major's birth year between 43-40. As her brother Marcellus was born in 42, and her younger sister Marcella Minor was born in 40/39, it seems most likely she was likely born in 43 or 41. Thus she was 15 or 13 at the time of her first marriage to Agrippa. It is of course possible that Marcella Major was born earlier than 43, but as I have suggested in the earlier section dealing with her father, Gaius Marcellus, it appears that, due to the civil war and Gaius Marcellus' position as an adversary of Julius Caesar, there was little opportunity for Gaius Marcellus and Octavia to produce children before 44.

<sup>241</sup> Agrippa's precise birth year is unknown, but Dio 54.28.3 records that he died in 12, and Plin. *HN* 7.46 records that he died in his fifty-first year.

<sup>242</sup> Severy 2003, 64 notes that "...Agrippa's family was the only one with which Augustus' relatives were allowed to intermarry regularly."

Octavian made a show of faux-Republicanism by resigning his power, he actually gave up very little. The following day, additional honors were given to Octavian, most importantly, his new name, Augustus.<sup>243</sup> As such, this is the year in which most Augustan scholars generally switch to referring to Octavian by his new name. This thesis will continue to refer to him as Octavian, despite his assumption of the name Augustus.

In 25, Octavian married his only child, Julia, to Octavia's only son, Marcellus. This marriage is telling. It shows that above all, Octavian was interested in the prominence of the Julii family, even over his wife's noble Claudii blood. Livia had two sons who were passed over in favor of Julia's matrimony to Octavia's son. As Octavian's only child, Julia's spouse was a powerful indication of preference. Many modern scholars see a strong Hellenistic influence driving this marriage and further, a dynastic undercurrent to Octavian's choice.<sup>244</sup> Yet, the drive for elite Romans to promote their relations to positions of power was not a novel concept in 25.<sup>245</sup> Romans placed great emphasis on their ancestors and great hope in their children. Evidence of this can be seen earlier in this thesis, in the constant drive of the older generation to promote their sons and nephews for election to consul.<sup>246</sup> The new concept was that it appeared Octavian wished to see his blood relation immediately succeed him, which was indeed a

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<sup>243</sup> See Crook 1996, 78-79 for an overview of 27.

<sup>244</sup> Bauman 1992, 101 for example.

<sup>245</sup> Crook 1996, 83.

<sup>246</sup> In Cicero's letters it is evident that Gaius Marcellus' father had great interest in seeing his son become consul, to restore their family's name to prominence as their family had not been elected to the consulship in a generation, pg. 26-27. Also, there was Cicero's anger that Phillipus' son usurped an honor which should have been granted to the son of another, pg. 40.

Hellenistic concept, but which could also be seen as a furthering of Roman ideals.

Leading Republican men of Rome expected that their sons would eventually rise to the highest office in Rome, but Octavian appeared to want his blood relation to immediately succeed him to the pinnacle of power in Rome. Additionally, though Octavian's new role in Roman politics was shrouded in a Republican cover, his assumption of sole mastery of Rome was more monarchical and Hellenistic than traditionally Roman. There is a good reason that scholars see the beginning of Octavian's dynastic designs here in the marriage of Julia to Marcellus.<sup>247</sup>

It should be considered that Octavian had been ill in 25, and was not even able to preside over his own daughter's wedding. Instead, that responsibility fell to Agrippa (Dio 53.27.5). Following Crook, I believe that Octavian's mortality had some influence on his choice to marry his daughter and nephew.<sup>248</sup> If Octavian were to die, who would succeed him? In 25, his nephew Marcellus was around seventeen, and his daughter Julia was fourteen. As he would make clear two years later in 23, Octavian was not ready to intrust the entirety of Roman rule to Marcellus. When Octavian fell ill in 23, he entrusted his ring, not to his nephew, but to Agrippa (Dio 53.30.1-2 and 53.31.2). This was not the first time Octavian had been ill, in fact, his frail health was a constant throughout his life.<sup>249</sup> Thus, in 25, when Marcellus and Julia were married, he likely had high hopes for their future, but as he was too ill even to attend their wedding, understood that he might not live long enough to pass his power directly to Marcellus, or any sons born from his

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<sup>247</sup> See Stevenson 2013 for a discussion of Octavian's succession planning.

<sup>248</sup> Crook 1996, 82-83.

<sup>249</sup> Crook 1996, 77-78.

nephew's marriage. We must consider then, who power would have passed to if Octavian had died prematurely. Dio tells us that it would have been Agrippa. Interestingly, this means that Octavia's daughter Marcella Major would be the leading woman of Rome, while Octavia's son grew to maturity. To my mind, this displays Octavian's trust in Agrippa most obviously, but also, his trust in Octavia to help guide the next generation of Roman leaders, indirectly of course.

Octavian recovered from the illness in 25 which kept him away from the nuptial ceremony of his daughter and when he returned to Rome in 24, the senate gave his new son-in-law Marcellus the ability to become a senator, and stand for the consulship, ten years earlier than was customary. Octavian's step-son, Livia's eldest child Tiberius was also given the ability to stand for offices early, but only five years earlier in comparison to Marcellus' ten year grant. But both young men were immediately elected to other political positions, Tiberius to quaestor and Marcellus to aedile (Dio 53.28.3-4).<sup>250</sup> This

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<sup>250</sup> Bauman 1992, 100-103 makes much of a perceived competition between Octavia and Livia, going so far to say on 101 that, "The rivalry between two powerful women foreshadows the later Julio-Claudian rivalries that are so prominent in Tacitus' pages." Yet, the constant inclusion of the sons of both women seems to indicate otherwise. There was no reason that the two women could not coexist without rivalry. They each had sons who could be honored, and it appears that while Octavian seemed to prefer Marcellus, he was not excluding Tiberius. Also, Octavian seemed to place the most importance on the continuation of his line through Julia, rather than Marcellus. Additionally, Octavia and Livia had many other responsibilities, I doubt that they had excess energy to expend drumming up a rivalry that did, and in fact, need not exist. The classical sources certainly fuel the idea of a rivalry, Dio 53.33.4 records that Livia was accused of poisoning Marcellus and as noted previously, Seneca *Ad Marciam* 2.4 writes that Octavia hated all mothers, and Livia most of all. These male authors assume the worst of both women, in my opinion, based purely on stereotypes of the female gender. Yet, episodes such as the proscriptions earlier show that the matrons of Rome often worked in concert with each other, despite their political divides. I imagine that as both Octavia and Livia were

grant was not entirely without precedent. It must be remembered that in 43 Octavian had strong-armed the senate into allowing him to stand for the consulship at nineteen, 20 years ahead of tradition.<sup>251</sup> In comparison, neither Marcellus nor Tiberius needed to march on Rome, and the senate granted this allowance to them without a metaphorical sword to their throats. As with Marcellus' inclusion in Octavian's triumph, Octavia likely had little to do with this grant from the senate. Yet, she would have certainly taken great pride in Marcellus' swift rise. It reflected favorably upon Octavia that she had raised such a worthy son.

Unfortunately, Marcellus' star had risen to its zenith and the following year would be one of tragedy for Octavia. Her brother very nearly died of an illness, but was brought back by the ministrations of a doctor named Antonius Musa. Unfortunately, this doctor could not save Octavia's son Marcellus, though he was given the same treatment as Octavian (Dio 53.30.4). Octavia was robbed of her only son when he was just twenty years old. Marcellus was described as a young man worthy of the station for which he was being raised. He was said to be of cheerful and noble disposition (Vell. Pat. 2.93.1). The poet Propertius wrote an elegy for Marcellus, in which the poet described Octavia as the best of mothers and the death of her son an unworthy reward (Prop. 3.18). Virgil too wrote of the death of Marcellus, bemoaning that fate only allowed the world to look upon him for a brief moment (Verg. *Aen.* 6.860-886). It was said that when Virgil, giving a reading of the *Aeneid* to Octavian and his family, came to the lines he had written about

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mothers, aware of the fragile mortality of their children, they would have shown each other sympathy rather than animosity.

<sup>251</sup> See pg. 61 above.



Marcellus, that Octavia fainted and was only revived with great difficulty (Suet. *Poet. Verg.* 32-33).

Octavia would have grieved at the death of her only son, of that there is no doubt, especially as his future had appeared so bright. Seneca the Younger, in his *Ad Marciam*, describes Octavia as so inconsolable that she remained forever in mourning, as if she had never left his funeral. He goes on to say that she hated all mothers and did not even wish to hear the name of her son (Sen. *Ad Marc.* 2.1-4). This dramatic description of Octavia's grief is put in to stark contrast with the grief of Livia, to demonstrate the proper way to mourn. It should not be considered an accurate representation of Octavia at this time. Clearly, from the story in Suetonius, Octavia did not lock herself away from the memory of her son, and though his name might cause her grief, she did not shy away from the sound of it. Additionally, Octavia had other children to care for and her life could not simply stop at the death of her son. Indeed, Plutarch remarks that Octavia dedicated a library in his name, and his father-in-law Octavian dedicated a theater (Dio 53.30.5; Livy *Per.* 140; Plut. *Marc.* 30.6).<sup>252</sup> Thus, while a romantic notion by Seneca, it appears unlikely Octavia simply ceased all her responsibilities upon the death of her son. She certainly grieved, as did the city of Rome. Octavian gave his nephew and son-in-law a public burial and interred Marcellus in his mausoleum, though the tomb was not even yet complete. He also ordered that a golden image of Marcellus, wreathed with a golden

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<sup>252</sup> There will be a further discussion of this library later with the material culture associated with Octavia, see pg. 166-172.

crown, be placed on the stage for the aedile games which Marcellus himself should have presided over (Dio 53.30.4-6).

Marcellus' premature death left the young Julia a widow. It also left Octavian without a clear path to succession, as he likely imagined the children of Julia, his grandchildren, would also share in his eventual legacy. It was said that Octavian did not know what man to give his daughter to in marriage, as he needed a son-in-law he could trust. Octavia is credited with the solution to the problem of an unwed Julia. She persuaded Agrippa to divorce her daughter, Marcella Major, and then convinced Octavian to allow Julia to marry the now available Agrippa (Plut. *Ant.* 87.2-3; Suet. *Aug.* 63.1). Marcella Major would then be married to Iullus, her step-brother, Antony's youngest son by Fulvia. These marriages took place two years after the death of Marcellus, in 21 (Dio 54.6.5; Plut. *Ant.* 87.4; Vell. Pat. 2.100.4). To my mind, this shows a commitment from Octavia to her brother's dynastic program: a program which in these years was still in its infancy. There is no record of Marcella Major's thoughts on her political divorce and remarriage. Before modern judgement is cast upon Octavia for what sounds like heartless use of her daughter's marriage, remember that Octavia's entrance into the written record was in a very similar circumstance. She was offered to Pompey by her great-uncle while married to Gaius Marcellus. Though Octavia did not divorce Gaius Marcellus, it appears clear from her rearranging of her daughter Marcella Major's husbands that she certainly would have.

Octavia, through her son's marriage to Julia, and her daughter's marriage, divorce, and remarriage, was demonstrating a new kind of *pietas*. This was not simple

loyalty to her brother, but instead loyalty to a dynastic program which placed the utmost importance on the continuation of a specific bloodline. The original marriage of Marcellus and Julia was the perfect arrangement, as it joined the Julii family through both of the young spouses. The death of Marcellus forced the siblings to reevaluate. It is significant that Octavian, and Octavia, placed the continuation of his direct issue over hers. Any of Octavia's biological children shared the same percentage of relation to Julius Caesar, yet it was Octavian who had been adopted by their great-uncle, placing his direct issue over Octavia's. The involvement of Octavia in the dynastic planning further disproves Seneca's claim that she withdrew completely into private life. Yes, the death of Marcellus further removed Octavia from direct authority by depriving her of a son through which she could exercise influence. She could no longer claim to be the mother of Octavian's heir-apparent.

Yet, her assistance in realigning the marriages of Agrippa, Julia, and Marcella Major show that Octavia did not stop assisting her brother. While Octavian experimented with new ways to consolidate and distribute political power, Octavia lent her assistance in experimenting with familial and dynastic power. By having Marcella Major divorce and remarry, Octavia was demonstrating that *pietas* was not just to one's parents or husband, but rather to the furthering of the family bloodline. Marcella Major was not remarrying as a show of *pietas* to Octavia or Agrippa, or even Octavian himself, but as a demonstration of her *pietas* to the Julii line which should be continued through Julia.

During the next decade, Octavia would see all of her daughters married.<sup>253</sup> Unfortunately, none were included in the written record. In fact, the next major life event associated with Octavia in the written record is her death. There is some discrepancy in the classical sources as to when Octavia actually died. Dio records her death in 11 (Dio 54.35.4), which appears to agree with Livy (Livy *Per.* 140), while Suetonius writes she died in 9 (Suet. *Aug.* 61.2). Most modern scholars tend to believe Dio and Livy, placing her death in 11.<sup>254</sup> Regardless of the precise year, Octavia was given an elaborate funeral. Following her death, Octavian had his sister's body lie in state within the temple of their great-uncle Julius Caesar where Octavian himself delivered a funeral oration for his sister. Her son-in-law Drusus delivered another funeral oration from the rostra.<sup>255</sup> The city of Rome grieved with Octavia's family, as the mourning was observed publicly and senators changed their dress accordingly. Her body was carried in procession by her son-in-law to her final resting place within Octavian's mausoleum where it would reside next to Marcellus (Dio 54.35.4-5).<sup>256</sup> It appears that the senate, possibly at the behest of Octavian, voted honors for Octavia (Suet. *Aug.* 61.2), but he did not allow all of these honors to be accepted (Dio 54.35.5).

This public honoring of Octavia in death should be seen as proof of her importance to Octavian and his dynastic program, and further, her importance to Rome as an moral example of a Roman *matrona*. Her funeral was public, and in addition it sought

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<sup>253</sup> The marriages and issue of each child will be reviewed below, see pg. 146-153.

<sup>254</sup> Bauman 1992, 103 and Crook 1996, 98. This is likely because her son-in-law Drusus, who would deliver a funeral oration for her, himself died in 9.

<sup>255</sup> Drusus, Livia's younger son, was married to Antonia Minor.

<sup>256</sup> Singer 1944, 132 includes the inscriptions.

to show her prestige among both women and men. The temple of her great-uncle was in fact the Temple of Divus Julius, the Divine Julius Caesar, and to have her lie in state there was to implicitly connect her to the divine ancestry of her family. Further, this temple was spatially surrounded by reminders of Octavian's victory over Egypt. The captured ships' prows from the battle of Actium were displayed on the rostra, or speaking platform, from which Octavian gave his funeral oration for his beloved sister. Thus at her funeral, mourners would be reminded of Octavia's grace during her marriage to Antony and her importance to Rome.<sup>257</sup>

Octavia died around the age of fifty-five, having been near the nucleus of Roman political power since the time she was twelve. One of the few women to be featured in the written record of the late Republic, Octavia managed to walk the delicate line of *pietas* throughout her life so successfully that not one source can find a "bad" thing to write about her. Despite this "good girl" reputation, Octavia frequently stepped outside the bounds of traditional female behavior by brokering public negotiations and publicly speaking of the the difficulties of being caught between her brother and husband. Yet her observations of other public female failures, such as Fulvia, and her understanding of Republican traditions through her early education by her Republican mother Atia and her first marriage to Gaius Marcellus show that it was not simply Octavia's "goodness" which undergirded her ability to appear as a woman, publicly, and not be subjected to the stereotypes associated with "bad girls" such as Cleopatra.

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<sup>257</sup> Zanker 1972, 13-14; Wood 2000, 34-35; Severy 2003, 94.

Octavia was astute enough to understand when it was acceptable to enter the stage of Roman politics, and when it was necessary to retreat into the traditional background. This acumen did not go unnoticed by her brother Octavian. He used the *exemplum* of Octavia's perfectly performed female Roman-ness to compliment both his acquisition of power, and his "restoration" of the Roman Republic. This performed "restoration" was not a step back into the Republic as he advertised, but a new hybrid form of political power which blended the trappings of a republic with the substance of a monarchy. Octavia too espoused this novel government, this principate, by demonstrating what a woman of the principate should look and act like. She retained the prized virtue of motherhood, and the *exemplum* of female negotiator, but added *pietas* to the dynasty of Octavian. The propaganda of Octavian pushed the idea that loyalty to Octavian *was* loyalty to Rome and Octavia supported this program by publicly performing motherhood and showing a willingness to rearrange social connections, such as marriages, for the benefit of the dynasty.

Octavia's moral example of Roman femininity can also be seen in the material culture associated with her. She was the first woman to appear on Roman coins, not as a deity, but as a mortal woman. The grant by Octavian in 35, which gave Octavia and Livia the ability to have statues made of them, assured that images of Octavia could and would be displayed in public locations. After Actium, Octavia contributed to Octavian's monumental building plans in Rome by sponsoring a portico which included libraries dedicated to her son. Thus, though Octavia mostly drops out of the written record in the years between the death of Marcellus and her own death, the creation of imagery

associated with her, as well as her own role as patroness, show that Octavia's influence and presence in Rome was undiminished.

Before this thesis turns to examine these pieces of material culture associated with Octavia, it will briefly discuss the lives of each of her children. This is not intended to be a full biography of any of these children, but rather it will demonstrate that the memory of Octavia would have permeated throughout what would become the imperial family for the next three generations.

### **The children of Octavia, biological and adopted**

The tangled web of the Julio-Claudian line has caused no few headaches for academics.<sup>258</sup> Octavian's desire to keep his bloodline as pure as possible led to him constantly searching for heirs and spouses within his, Octavia, or Livia's descendants. There are very few marriages outside Octavian's family and, as mentioned previously, they were often with Agrippa's family. This portion of the thesis will briefly discuss each of Octavia's children, and some of her grandchildren, as the final three emperors of the Julio-Claudian dynasty were her descendants. Modern soap operas strive to mimic the level of drama that the Julio-Claudian dynasty possessed, in large part due to their internal political dynamics and power plays. Thus, these short biographies are not at all meant to explain the imperial politics following Octavia's death in 11. Rather, I would like the reader to walk away with the understanding that Octavia's memory would linger in the halls of imperial power for at least three generations.

#### *Marcus Claudius Marcellus (Marcellus)*<sup>259</sup>

The only son of Octavia from her first husband Gaius Marcellus, Marcellus and his short public life have been described above. One other detail should be mentioned. In 39, at three years old, Marcellus was betrothed to the unnamed daughter of Sextus Pompey (Dio 48.38.5). This marriage never took place, but it is yet another reminder that

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<sup>258</sup> Corbier 1995 is an excellent article with multiple family trees which are helpful visual aides for the interwoven webs of Octavian, Livia, and Octavia's descendants. Holland 2015, while overly dramatic with its blood streaked cover and subtitle, is a good entry into the narrative of the Julio-Claudian years.

<sup>259</sup> *PIR II*(2), 213-215, no. 925.



the children of Octavia had the potential, from a very early age, to be used to seal marriage negotiations, and not just the female children.

*Claudia Marcella Major (Marcella Major)*<sup>260</sup>

The elder daughter of Octavia and Gaius Marcellus was likely born in 43 or 41.<sup>261</sup> She was married to Agrippa in 28 (Dio 53.1.2) and divorced by him in 21 to make way for her cousin Julia, Octavian's daughter, to marry Agrippa (Dio 54.6.5; Plut. *Ant.* 87.4; Vell. Pat. 2.100.4). Her marriage to Agrippa produced children (Suet. *Aug.* 63.1) though their identities are difficult to discern.<sup>262</sup> There appears to be at least one daughter, Vipsania Marcella Agrippina who would later marry Publius Quinctilius Varus, consul of 13. In 21, Marcella Major would marry Iullus, Antony's younger son by Fulvia. This marriage would produce at least one son, named Lucius Antonius, and an unnamed daughter.<sup>263</sup> In 2, Iullus would be accused of adultery with Julia, Octavian's daughter. For this crime, he was either killed or voluntarily committed suicide. There are no other recorded marriages for Marcella Major.

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<sup>260</sup> *PIR II*(2), 264-265, no.1102. See also Syme 1986, table 6.

<sup>261</sup> See n. 240.

<sup>262</sup> Syme 1986, 144-147.

<sup>263</sup> Syme 1986, 144.

*Claudia Marcella Minor (Marcella Minor)*<sup>264</sup>

The younger daughter of Octavia and Gaius Marcellus was likely born in very late 40, or very early 39.<sup>265</sup> Of all Octavia's children, Marcella Minor is the most difficult to trace throughout the historical record.<sup>266</sup> It appears she was married twice, first to M. Messalla Appianus, consul of 12. This marriage seems to have produced two children, a daughter Claudia Pulchra and a son Messalla Barbatus. This son Messalla Barbatus would later marry Domitia Lepida Minor, and they would be the parents of the infamous Valeria Messallina, wife of the Emperor Claudius.<sup>267</sup> After the death of her first husband, Marcella Minor appears to have married Paullus Aemilius Lepidus, the son of L. Aemilius Paullus who was co-consul with Marcella Minor's father Gaius Marcellus in 50. This marriage produced a son, Paullus Aemilius Regillus. The marriages and children of Marcella Minor are difficult to ascertain due to an extreme dearth of written record associated with her. The dedication of half a chapter by Syme in his *Augustan Aristocracy* shows that Marcella Minor and her husbands and children have been the cause of many squabbles and headaches for historians and prosopographers.

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<sup>264</sup> *PIR II*(2), 265-266, no. 1103. See also Syme 1986, table 6.

<sup>265</sup> See n. 21, n. 155, n. 168.

<sup>266</sup> Syme 1986, 147-154 dedicates almost an entire chapter to searching out Marcella Minor's marriages and children.

<sup>267</sup> Balsdon 1962, 97-107 and Syme 1986, 182-184 both give brief overviews of her scandalous life. See also Bauman 1992, 167-179.

*Julia Antonia Major (Antonia Major)*<sup>268</sup>

The elder daughter of Octavia and Antony was born in 39, just before her parents departed to Athens. She would live with them there for the first few years of her life, before returning to Rome following the Treaty of Tarentum in 37.<sup>269</sup> She would never again see her father Antony, as he departed to the east and never returned, even in death. Octavian allowed Antonia Major and her younger sister Antonia Minor to inherit some of their father's estate after his death (Dio 51.15.7). Antonia Major had been betrothed to Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus as part of the settlement at Tarentum in 37, and it appears, despite Antony's death, this marriage proceeded. The only marriage of Antonia Major would produce three children, Domitia Lepida Major, Domitia Lepida Minor, and Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus. Her daughter Domitia Lepida Minor would be the mother of Valeria Messalina with her cousin, Messalla Barbatus, the son of Marcella Minor. More importantly, her son Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus married Agrippina the Younger, granddaughter of Antonia Minor.<sup>270</sup> This marriage would produce the Emperor Nero, whose name at birth was Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. Antonia Major, like her sister Antonia Minor, and half-sister Marcella Major, never married following the death of her husband.

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<sup>268</sup> *PIR I*(2), 171-172, no. 884. See also Syme 1986, 155-167.

<sup>269</sup> See pg. 95-99 above.

<sup>270</sup> See Barrett 1996; Ginsburg 2006 for biographies of Agrippina the Younger, mother of the Emperor Nero and eventual wife of the Emperor Claudius.

*Julia Antonia Minor (Antonia Minor)*<sup>271</sup>

The younger daughter of Octavia and Antony was born in 36 after her mother had returned to Rome following the Treaty of Tarentum. As Antony would not again return from the east, she would never meet her father. Antonia Minor was married to Livia's younger son, Nero Claudius Drusus (called Drusus). This marriage would produce three children, Germanicus Julius Caesar (called Germanicus), Claudia Livia Julia (called Livilla), and the Emperor Claudius, named Tiberius Claudius Drusus at birth. Her son Germanicus would later marry the excessively fertile Agrippina the Elder, and their marriage would produce Agrippina the Younger and the Emperor Caligula, named Gaius Julius Caesar Germanicus at birth, along with four other children.<sup>272</sup> After her husband Drusus died in 9, Antonia Minor never remarried and she moved herself and her family into the house of Livia.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> *PIR I(2)*, 172-173, no. 885.

<sup>272</sup> Their other living issue were named Nero Julius Caesar, Drusus Caesar, Julia Drusilla, and Julia Livilla. Agrippina the Elder and Germanicus produced nine children before his death in 19 CE, although not all lived to adulthood.

<sup>273</sup> Bauman 1992, 138-156 for an overview of Antonia Minor and her daughter-in-law Agrippina the Elder.

*Iullus Antonius (Iullus)*<sup>274</sup>

The younger son of Fulvia and Antony was born around 43, and as such would have been only three when his mother died. His name is rather unusual as Brennan notes, “Romans up to that point [43] in the developed Republic had hardly ever deviated from a traditional roster of a dozen and a half first names, with even fewer being in common use.”<sup>275</sup> From the preceding surveys of Octavia’s children, one can see this trend toward using a small number of family names. Thus, Fulvia’s choice to name him Iullus was unusual. The sons of Fulvia were the earliest addition to Octavia’s expanding household. Iullus and his older brother Antyllus would have become Octavia’s step-children in 40, after her marriage to their father Antony. It appears Iullus received care equivalent to Octavia’s biological son, Marcellus. He had a tutor, Crassicus (Suet. *Gram.* 18), and Octavia was said to have raised Iullus so high that he was behind only Agrippa and the sons of Livia in Octavian’s estimation (Plut. *Ant.* 87). As seen above in the short biography of Marcella Major, he was even married into the family in 21. Iullus progressed through the traditional Roman political career, serving as praetor in 13 (Dio 54.26; Vell. Pat. 2.100.4), consul in 10 (Joseph. *AJ* 16.172; Vell. Pat. 2.100.4), and proconsul of Asia in 7 (Joseph. *AJ* 16.172; Vell. Pat. 2.100.4). He was highly schooled and learned as evidenced by his tutor Crassicus, as well as the fact that he was said to have written an epic poem on Diomedes, the foe of Aeneas.<sup>276</sup> Even the poet Horace took

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<sup>274</sup> *PIR I*(2), 153, no. 800.

<sup>275</sup> Brennan 2012, 357.

<sup>276</sup> See Acro on Horace *Odes* 4.2.

notice of Antony's son in his *Odes*, when he urged Iullus to write about Octavian's Gallic victories (Hor. *Odes* 4.2). Yet the favor of Octavia, dead for almost a decade, could not save Iullus in 2, when he was accused of adultery with Octavian's daughter Julia.<sup>277</sup> In the wake of the scandal, Iullus chose, or was forced into, suicide.<sup>278</sup> The younger Seneca wittily remarked that "again a woman with an Antony had to be feared."<sup>279</sup>

### *Alexander Helios and Ptolemy Philadelphus*

Although the two sons of Cleopatra were spared death by Octavian, there is nothing more about them following their return to Rome. Dio assures us that Octavian spared the lives of both Alexander and Ptolemy (Dio 51.15.6) and Plutarch confirms that their lives were spared, adding that they were raised in the house of Octavia (Plut. *Ant.* 87.1). Upon the children's arrival to Rome in 29, Alexander was paraded through the city during Octavian's triumph with his twin sister and an effigy of his dead mother (Dio 51.21.8). Yet there is no record of either boy after this time. It would not be surprising if they were quietly killed, as either boy could be a rallying point in Egypt against Octavian. Less nefariously, child mortality continued to be high, and as they had been reared in Egypt, their immune systems were not acclimated to the climate of Italy.

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<sup>277</sup> See Fantham 2006 for a full biography of Octavian's only biological child Julia.

<sup>278</sup> Hallett 2006 explores the evidence relating to Julia's adultery and concludes that it was perhaps because of the memory of Iullus' mother Fulvia and the fact that Octavian had spared Iullus the fate of his older brother, that Octavian chose to punish Iullus so harshly.

<sup>279</sup> Sen. *Brev. Vit.* 14.4.5. Translation by Hallett 2006, 160.

*Cleopatra Selene*<sup>280</sup>

The only daughter to her infamous mother, Cleopatra Selene was raised in the household of Octavia. She would go on to marry another political prisoner, Juba II (Dio 51.15.6 and 51.21.8; Plut. *Ant.* 87.1) . The younger Juba had been kept in Italy as a guarantee for his father Juba I's good behavior after his defeat by Julius Caesar. The two young royals would return to Juba II's homeland of Mauretania in Africa where they would transform their capital into a cultural jewel, complete with an impressive library.<sup>281</sup> One wonders about the influences of Cleopatra Selene's biological mother, Cleopatra, and her early upbringing in Alexandria, in tandem with her adopted mother, Octavia, and formative years in Rome. Both women were known to be learned and cultured, it should be no surprise that when Cleopatra Selene struck out on her own, she too would exhibit the qualities of both of her famous mothers.

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The descendants of Octavia, both biological and adopted, would reside in and around the Roman imperial halls of power for three generations past her death. The Emperor Claudius was her grandson and the Emperors Caligula and Nero were her great-grandsons. Interestingly, all of these emperors were descended from her daughters by Antony. Thus, though he lost at Actium, Antony's bloodline would mingle with his rival Octavian's for generations throughout the ruling family in Rome.

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<sup>280</sup> *PIR II*(2), 272-273, no.1148.

<sup>281</sup> Roller 2003 is a full exploration of the lives of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene after they moved from Rome. Schiff 2010, 291-292 provides a brief of overview of their lives.

## Material Culture<sup>282</sup>

Throughout this thesis, allusions have been made to different types of material culture associated with Octavia. This section will examine the coins, portraiture, and portico which are connected to Octavia and will discuss, as far as possible, Octavia's agency in the creation, display, and propagation of these various types of material culture bearing her image and name. As Woodhull saliently explains:

Because of the prominence of her sister-in-law Livia in Augustan politics in Rome, Octavia's historic role tends to be overshadowed in literature as does the important colonnade she built at the southeastern edge of the Circus Flaminius in the Campus Martius. Yet, Octavia deserves closer attention than she has received because she, not Livia, was the first woman to serve Augustus' political needs during the civil conflict by marrying his opponent, Marc Antony. Moreover, it was she who initially joined her brother in revitalizing the capital city as an architectural patron. In doing so, Octavia promoted not only her brother's hegemonic claims and social reforms, but her own public persona...the building provided an example for the woman of means to construct a civic identity typically closed to her in public life.<sup>283</sup>

To Woodhull, I would add the coins and portraiture of Octavia also need to be examined in concert with Octavia's portico to show that the building was not Octavia's first foray into visual representation of herself as an *exemplum* of a Roman *matrona*. Rather, Octavia had been testing the boundaries of tradition when it came to women and imagery in public nearly 15 years before she began construction of her portico.

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<sup>282</sup> For an introductory overview of Roman patronage and benefaction, see Lomas and Cornell 2003. For an introductory overview of women and patronage, see Nichols 1989; Hemelrijk 2004a, 2012, 2013; Bielman 2012. See Kampen 1991 for an examination of woman as historical subjects in art.

<sup>283</sup> Woodhull 2003, 14-15.



## Coins

The earliest material culture associated with Octavia are coins bearing her image, minted during her time as Antony's wife.<sup>284</sup> The first coins showing the image of Octavia were made following the accord at Brundisium in 40. Octavian minted coins with portraits of himself and Antony, along with symbols of *concordia*, and Antony minted similar coins, with paired portraits of the newly reconciled triumvirates.<sup>285</sup> Uniquely, Antony also minted coins with portraits of Octavia. One such example is an *aureus*, a gold coin, minted in 38/37 which has a portrait of Antony on the obverse, and a portrait of Octavia on the reverse.<sup>286</sup> It is at this time Octavia becomes the first mortal woman to be pictured upon Roman coinage.<sup>287</sup> She appears as an attractive young Roman woman with a *nodus* hairstyle in which her hair is pulled into a bun at the nape of her neck and the hair at her forehead is looped back and pinned. Ovid described this hairstyle as the best for a woman with a round face (*Ov. Ars Am.* 3.139-140). Here, in material form, is the

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<sup>284</sup> This thesis will strive to describe these coins, but will avoid numismatic technicalities.

<sup>285</sup> Kleiner 1992b, 362. See also Newman 1990 for a discussion of the powerful political messages coins could convey and how Octavian and Antony sought to compete via coins.

<sup>286</sup> Crawford *RRC I*, 531 no. 527; Crawford *RRC II*, pl. 63; Banti-Simonetti *CNR* 2, 95 no. 7; Sydenham *CRR*, 193 no. 1196. See Wood 2000, n. 66 for additional citations

<sup>287</sup> There is an ongoing scholarly debate about some coins minted in Lugdunum with the obverse bearing an image of a female bust with wings, which would traditionally identify the woman as the goddess Victory. Yet, her hairstyle is contemporary to first century BCE, causing some scholars to believe this goddess to be modeled off Fulvia. While the argument is mostly convincing, even if this Victory is modeled off Fulvia, she is still depicted in the guise of a goddess, whereas Octavia is pictured as herself, a mortal woman. Delia 1991, 201-202 argues against the identification of Fulvia. Kleiner 1992b, 359-361 appears to support the identification of Fulvia. See Wood 2000, 41-43 for a full overview of the scholarly debate.

sentiment of which Virgil wrote in his fourth *Eclogue*.<sup>288</sup> Octavia was to be the physical representation of *concordia* and hope for a lasting *pax* between Antony and Octavian, and Antony wished to pictorially advertise this fact. There is a similar series of *aurei* minted around the same time, perhaps 36/35, with the same arrangement, Antony on the obverse and Octavia on the reverse.<sup>289</sup> It should be noted that Octavia is never named on these or any other coins, but her identity can be inferred through Antony's titles in the coin's inscriptions.<sup>290</sup>

There are also several *cistophoroi*, silver coins, minted in the east with Octavia's image. These coins are named for the cult objects, *cista mystica*, depicted on them, which are associated with the god Dionysus, Antony's divine alter-ego. Octavia's bust appears on one version on the reverse, hovering above the *cista mystica*, flanked by snakes.<sup>291</sup> On another version, Antony and Octavia's portraits are jugate on the obverse, with the Dionysian imagery on the reverse.<sup>292</sup> These coins, minted around 35, call to mind Antony and Octavia's time in Athens where they were both honored with semi-divine status. The inclusion of Octavia on these coins celebrating Antony's divine connections seem to

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<sup>288</sup> See pg. 90-91.

<sup>289</sup> Crawford *RRC I*, 534 no. 533, 3a and 3b; Crawford *RRC II*, pl. 63; Banti-Simonetti *CNR 2*, 93-94 nos, 1-6; Sydenham *CRR*, 193 nos. 1200-1201. See Wood 2000, n. 66 for additional citations.

<sup>290</sup> Wood 2000, 45.

<sup>291</sup> Banti-Simonetti *CNR 2*, 96-100 nos. 8-16; Sydenham *CRR*, 193 no. 1197. See Wood 2000, 44 n.64 for additional citations.

<sup>292</sup> Banti-Simonetti *CNR 2*, 100-104 nos. 17-23; Sydenham *CRR*, 193 no. 1198. See Wood 2000, 44 n. 65 for additional citations for these coins.

imply that he considered his wife to be a worthy companion, perhaps not an equal, but certainly a noble consort.

Multiple new series of coins were minted following the agreement at Tarentum in 37. As Octavia played a significant role in these negotiations, she is assigned a significant role on the new coinage. There are a series of *asses*, bronze coins, which have jugate portraits of Antony and Octavia on the obverse.<sup>293</sup> There are also series of *sestertii* and *dupondii*, bronze coins, which show a new arrangement in which on the obverse the portraits of Antony and Octavia are facing one another.<sup>294</sup> Most interesting are a series of *tresses*, bronze coins, which place on the obverse jugate portraits of Antony and Octavian facing a portrait of Octavia.<sup>295</sup> The jugate portraits tellingly place Octavian behind Antony, in the position where wives, such as Octavia, were traditionally included in jugate portraits. This placement certainly makes sense as they were minted by Antony who wished to be seen as the dominant partner in their relationship. By placing Octavia across from her husband and brother, she is shown to be as important as the men on this coin, an equal participant in the negotiations. This makes sense considering Octavia exerted agency in playing the role of mediator and bringing the two men together for

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<sup>293</sup> Banti-Simonetti *CNR* 2, 119-120 nos. 1-3; Sydenham *CRR*, 198 nos. 1258 and 1264, 199 no. 1268. See Wood 2000, 44 n. 65 for further citations.

<sup>294</sup> *Sestertii*: Banti-Simonetti *CNR* 2, 105-106 nos. 24-26, 109 nos. 33, 111-112 nos. 37-38; Sydenham *CRR*, 197 no. 1255, 198 nos. 1261 and 1265. *Dupondii*: Banti-Simonetti *CNR* 2, 106-107, 27-29, 110 nos. 34-35, 113 nos. 39-40; Sydenham *CRR*, 197 nos. 1257, 198 nos. 1263 and 1267. See Wood 2000, 49 n. 77 for further citations.

<sup>295</sup> Banti-Simonetti *CNR* 2, 119-120 nos. 1-3; Sydenham *CRR* 197 no. 1256, 198 nos. 1262 and 1266. See Wood 2000, 44 n.65 for further citations.

peaceful negotiation. This coin also appears to support the conclusion that Octavia was not just a bystander in the negotiations at Tarentum.

These coins series of *sestertii*, *dupondii*, *asses*, and *tresses*, all feature nautical imagery on the reverse, such as varying numbers of ships and as such they are often referred to in a group as the “fleet coinage.” This maritime theme choice recalls the fact that ships were part of the agreement at Tarentum, as well as the fact that Octavia negotiated extra vessels for Octavian in return for troops from Antony.<sup>296</sup> The reverse of the *sestertii* deserve special notice. The nautical imagery illustrated on this coin is a divine couple, Poseidon and Amphitrite, embracing one another in a chariot drawn by four hippocamps. This is a surprisingly romantic image and because it was minted following the Treaty of Tarentum, the coin series should perhaps be viewed as another indication that Antony did not send Octavia back to Rome following the negotiations due to a lack of consideration for his wife.<sup>297</sup>

Octavia’s agency in relation to these coins is somewhat difficult to ascertain. Her image on the coins is serving the propaganda purpose of her husband Antony, but Octavia was far from a passive observer of events. As argued previously, Octavia did not choose her marriage to Antony, but a lack of choice in her spouse does not prohibit her from expressing agency as Antony's wife once married. If Antony had suggested the imagery on these coins, Octavia would likely need to have agreed to them, especially as

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<sup>296</sup> See pg. 95-99.

<sup>297</sup> See pg. 99-100.

they would need to design a portrait to carve into the die used to make each coin.<sup>298</sup> By allowing her image to appear on Roman coinage, even Roman coinage minted in the east, Octavia is showing her willingness to step into new territory as the first woman to lend her mortal visage to coinage. This novel display of her image resides within her established female role, honoring her as negotiator and peacemaker, but is non-traditional nonetheless as Octavia is portrayed publicly on circulating coinage. By using Octavia on his coins, Antony “openly acknowledge[d] that a woman has helped to bring about the reconciliation of two powerful men.”<sup>299</sup>

It is worthwhile to briefly consider Antony’s use of his wife Octavia in contrast to Octavian’s use of his sister Octavia in their combative propaganda during the triumviral period. Both Antony and Octavian seem to place Octavia in a position of honor, as a fine *exemplum* of Roman womanhood. Antony’s inclusion of Octavia on his coinage seems to imply a possible long-term plan to elevate her to a queen-like status, something which would be recognizable in the Hellenistic east over which Antony held power. Hellenistic queens had a long history of appearing on coins, as the counterpart to their husbands, the kings, as a show of dynastic strength. Indeed, Antony displayed Cleopatra on his coins as well.<sup>300</sup> A dynasty, after all, required women to prosper. In Italy, Octavian chose not to display Octavia’s image on coins, but his grant to Octavia and Livia in 35 of the right to

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<sup>298</sup> Kleiner 1996, 36 goes so far as to suggest Octavia could have encouraged Antony to put her portrait on his coins. While this must remain speculation, it does appear that Octavia had an influence on her husband’s behavior both in Athens and at the negotiations at Tarentum, so it is certainly possible.

<sup>299</sup> Kleiner 1996, 36.

<sup>300</sup> Wood 2000, 46 gives examples of the coinage of Antony and Cleopatra.

statues seems to imply he too had a long-term plan to include women in some form of dynastic formation. Yet, as we discussed, immediately following Actium, Octavian's demonization of Cleopatra did not allow him to advertise women as important to his continued dominance of Roman politics. However, the seeds of a dynasty had been carefully planted in Octavia, but, to follow the metaphor, must bloom in the shade of older Republican ideals until the memory of Cleopatra had faded. As Rose notes, "His [Octavian's] dynastic strategies were decidedly cautious at the beginning of his reign, but he gradually began to emphasize the future of the dynasty in addition to its past."<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Rose 1997, 8.

## Portraiture

The portraiture of Octavia is unquestionably more difficult to identify than her image on coins. Though she is not named on any of the coinage bearing her image, the context of the coins allow for certain identification. None of the portraits believed to be Octavia were found with accompanying inscriptions which would identify her with certainty, and so often scholars debate if a portrait should be identified as Octavia or her sister-in-law Livia.

There are two portraits which scholars generally agree can be identified as Octavia. One is a bust found in Velletri, the ancestral hometown of the Octavii. It is made from marble and likely adorned the top of a herm, which was more honorific than a simple portrait bust and allowed for up-close observation. This portrait shares physiological similarities with the *aurei* discussed above, although the hairstyle is slightly different with a higher set bun than on the coins. The location in which this bust was found, Velletri, also lends to its identification as Octavia.<sup>302</sup> The other generally accepted portrait is a fragmented marble head from Smyrna. Due to its damage, it is unknown how the Smyrna bust was originally displayed. This portrait also shares similarities with the coin portraits of Octavia in both hair and physiognomy.<sup>303</sup> The grant in 35 by Octavian and the senate gave Octavia and Livia the right to statues and it seems likely that the Velletri and Smyrna busts are modeled off Octavia's appearance at around this time,

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<sup>302</sup> Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme, inv. 121221. See Kleiner 1992a, 39, fig. 17; Winkes 1995, 68-69, fig. 15, and 210 no. 226; Wood 2000, 52-54.

<sup>303</sup> Athens, National Archaeological Museum no. 547. Winkes 1995, 68, 208-209 no. 221; Wood 2000, 52-53.

considering their resemblance to the coin portraits which were minted between 39 and 34.<sup>304</sup> Both portrait busts express the *exemplum* of proper Roman *matrona*. Octavia is shown in these portraits as soft, elegant, and simply adorned. Her *nodus* hairstyle appears effortless but would have likely taken assistance to create, which speaks to her status as an elite woman. Velletri and Smyrna are geographically far enough apart to imply that this woman, Octavia, was well-known throughout the empire.<sup>305</sup> In addition to the younger Velletri and Smyrna types, Erhart convincingly identifies a portrait in the Getty collection which appears to be an older Octavia, perhaps commissioned at her death.<sup>306</sup>

It appears Octavia was also included in statuary groups which honored the imperial family. The *Ara Pacis Augustae*, the carved marble altar to Augustan peace in Rome, was started before the death of Octavia in 13, but was not completed until 9.<sup>307</sup> Though none of the figures on the four friezes are identified by inscriptions, scholars have postulated the identities of Octavian's family on each of them. Octavia is frequently identified as a figure on the north frieze, along with Octavian's daughter Julia and possibly Marcella Major and Marcella Minor.<sup>308</sup> There is an identification of Octavia in a group of Julio-Claudian portraits, dedicated by an association of doctors, in Italy at

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<sup>304</sup> Kleiner 1992a, 39.

<sup>305</sup> Wood 2000, 52.

<sup>306</sup> Bust of Octavia Minor. The J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. No. 72.AA.106. See Erhart 1980 for full discussion of this identification.

<sup>307</sup> See Kleiner and Buxton 2008 for a discussion of the *Ara Pacis* as a Roman counterpart to Antony's "Donations of Alexandria."

<sup>308</sup> Rose 1997, 102-103, pl. 108.5.



Velia.<sup>309</sup> And a portrait of Octavia also appears to be included alongside Livia in front of two temples at Glanum in modern-day France.<sup>310</sup>

Besides the marble busts, there are a few precious cameo portraits which are also possibly identified as Octavia. One is made of sardonyx, a carved white portrait on a dark background. The stark contrast is striking and this image of Octavia from the side closely resembles the early *aurei* coin portraits.<sup>311</sup> Three other cameo possibilities are identified by Winkes, each corresponding to one of the types of portrait busts. One made of glass paste, one of sardonyx, and one of yellow chalcedony, each cameo features the *nodus* hairstyle and resemblance to the coin portraiture, in addition to their similarities to Octavia's marble busts.<sup>312</sup> The varying material types and sizes again allude to the fact that this representation of Octavia would have been well-known and recognizable across the empire.

In comparison to Livia, the small number of surviving portrait busts and cameos of Octavia seem to imply she was of lesser importance than her sister-in-law.<sup>313</sup> And from the standpoint of modernity, this may certainly be true. Livia lived far longer than Octavia, she has far more surviving portraiture, and is rightfully recognized as the first Empress of Rome. Yet the dearth of images of Octavia which survived antiquity should

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<sup>309</sup> Rose 1997, 120-121, pls. 125 and 126.

<sup>310</sup> Rose 1997, 128-129, pl. 166.

<sup>311</sup> Cameo with portrait of Octavia, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale. See Babelon 1951; Kleiner 1992a, 78. Winkes 144, no. 69 identifies this cameo as Livia, contra to Babelon and Kleiner.

<sup>312</sup> Winkes 1995, 67-71, 209 no. 222, 210 no. 224 and 225.

<sup>313</sup> See Bartman 1999 for an in-depth look at Livia's portraiture.

not be assumed to speak to her importance during her own lifetime and during the Julio-Claudian dynasty.<sup>314</sup> The random chance which allows some material culture to survive while others are lost is not indicative of influence. Livia, still living during the Julio-Claudian dynasty, would certainly have been favored as a portrait subject as the patron could still curry favor with her by producing a portrait bust. Octavia's portraits would have been focused on honoring her as an ancestor of the dynasty. Yet, again, this does not speak to influence or importance of Octavia while she lived. Additionally, the difficulty in distinguishing between Octavia and Livia looms large. Certainly, some of Livia's portraits have accompanying inscriptions which allow for definite identification. But identification of inscription-less portraits remain doubtful due to the frequent assimilation of features between women and the men which they are connected to.

Frequently wives are made to resemble their husbands, and as such, on some of Octavia's coins with Antony, she acquires a thicker neck and wider nose to match her husband's visage.<sup>315</sup> After the death of Antony, with no husband to assimilate her features to, Octavia's portraiture would have been made to remind the viewer of her resemblance to her brother Octavian. As the wife of Octavian, Livia would have also assimilated features of her husband, thus Octavia and Livia would both resemble Octavian which, in turn, make the portraits of the two women more difficult to decipher

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<sup>314</sup> Bartman 1999, 214 suggests that "Octavia's numismatic history has also generated a false impression of her importance as a subject in Roman portraiture." To my mind this statement is reductive. Though in posterity Livia appears more important due to her longer life and preserved portraits, this does not imply that Octavia was less important during her lifetime.

<sup>315</sup> Erhart 1980, 125; Wood 2000, 46.

between when attempting to positively identify them. The coin which features the jugate portraits of Antony and Octavian facing a portrait of Octavia clearly show the resemblance between the brother and sister, which shows them both with long, straight noses and small, round chins.<sup>316</sup> Put simply, Octavia may be more present in the portraiture than scholars can positively identify.

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<sup>316</sup> Erhart 1980, 124 n. 26.

### **The *Porticus Octaviae*, or the Portico of Octavia<sup>317</sup>**

Construction on Octavia's portico began in the mid 20s, possibly to celebrate Marcellus' aedileship in 23, but it could have been earlier in 27.<sup>318</sup> Her portico was a replacement of an older portico of Metellus, built after 146 by a general Metellus from the spoils of his victorious Macedonian campaign (Vell. Pat. 1.11.3).<sup>319</sup> Octavia's new portico was built to enclose the two temples which had also been within Metellus' portico, one honoring Juno Regina and the other Jupiter Stator. At the time in which Octavia's portico was being built, other men, including Octavian, were also undertaking a building program which would revive the infrastructure of Rome while linking Octavian's newly won political supremacy to the reinvigorated Rome.

The Campus Martius was the area of focus for the early building program. Octavian began in 33 by restoring the portico of Gn. Octavius and beginning construction on his mausoleum. Octavian would also resume construction on a theater begun by his

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<sup>317</sup> There has previously been much debate on who exactly built the *Porticus Octaviae*. Frustratingly, there is a similarly named *Porticus Octavia*. This led to scholars believing that Octavian erected Octavia's portico and merely named it after her. This is in part because Suetonius' claim that Octavian erected buildings which he named after his family members (Suet. *Aug.* 29.4). But, Octavian himself records in his *Res Gestae* that he restored the *Porticus Octavia* in 33 (*RG* 4.19). This portico which Octavian restored was built in 168 by a Gn. Octavius to commemorate a naval battle. Festus 188L provides the helpful information that there were two porticos with the name Octavia, thus we can be more than reasonably assured that Octavia built her own portico to replace Metellus' and Octavian restored the portico built by Gn. Octavius. See Boyd 1953 and Richardson 1976 for complete arguments for Octavia's portico. Woodhull 2003, 23-25 also reiterates that Octavia was the patroness for her portico.

<sup>318</sup> Richardson 1976 argues for Marcellus' aedileship as the beginning of construction. Woodhull 2003 believes it was begun in 27.

<sup>319</sup> Boyd 1953, 152; Richardson 1976, 60.

great-uncle Julius Caesar. This is the theater which Octavian would later dedicate as the Theater of Marcellus to honor his son-in-law and nephew after his death.<sup>320</sup> When Agrippa was aedile in 33 he embarked on buildings of his own, such as the *Saepta Iulia* and the Pantheon.<sup>321</sup> Another ally of Octavian, Sosianus, restored the Temple of Apollo Medicus, Octavian's divine alter-ego. Octavia's portico was the lone contribution to the Campus Martius by a female patron.<sup>322</sup>

Along with razing and rebuilding the portico itself, the two temples inside were also refurbished though without inscriptions to attest to their new renovations (Plin. *NH* 36.42). Even Ovid cannot fail to admire the beautiful marble-work put in place by Octavia's patronage (Ov. *Ars am.* 1.69-70). In addition, Octavia added a library which was later dedicated in the name of Marcellus following his death (Dio 49.43.8; Plut. *Marc.* 30.6; Suet. *Gram.* 21), a *curia*, or public meeting place (Plin *NH* 36.28), and a *schola* (Plin. *NH* 35.114, 36.22). The *curia* was used on at least one occasion by the Senate for a meeting in 7 (Dio 55.8.1). The library had a Greek and Roman section (Festus 188) and it was large enough for a G. Melissus to be assigned to put the scrolls in order (Suet. *Gram.* 21). The library's continued use is further attested to as at least four employees of the library were buried in the household tomb of Marcella Minor.<sup>323</sup> Unfortunately, none of Octavia's original portico has survived to modernity, as it was

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<sup>320</sup> See pg. 139.

<sup>321</sup> Crook 1996, 82.

<sup>322</sup> Woodhull 2003, 20.

<sup>323</sup> *CIL* 6, 4431-3, 4435, 4461; Boyd 1953, 157; Richardson 1976, 62; Woodhull 2003, 21-22.

damaged by two fires, the first of which was in 80 CE.<sup>324</sup> After the second fire, in 191 CE, the damage to Octavia's portico was so severe that it needed to be repaired by Septimius Severus and his son Caracalla in 203.<sup>325</sup>

It appears Octavia's portico also served as a museum of sorts, as many famous works of art were housed within the different buildings of the portico. There was a marble Cupid by Praxiteles in the *schola* (Plin. *NH* 36.22) as well as famous pictures of Hesione, and another of Philip, Alexander, and Athena painted by Antiphilus (Plin. *NH* 35.114). Marble statues of Aesclepius and Diana by Praxiteles son Cephisodotus were displayed inside the Temple of Juno (Plin. *NH* 36.24), along with multiple statues of Juno by various artists (Plin. *NH* 36.35) as well as paintings and other embellishments associated with women (Plin. *NH* 36.43). In the *curia* there resided Cupid Holding a Thunderbolt, but there was no consensus on who carved the statue (Plin. *NH* 36.28). Other art inside the portico include an exceptionally beautiful Venus by Pheidias (Plin. *NH* 36.15) and a painting of Heracles Ascending into Heaven, as well as a painting of Laomedon's story, both fine works by Arisophon (Plin. *NH* 35.139). Just outside the portico was a statue of Apollo by Philiscus of Rhodes (Plin. *NH* 36.34).

Also inside the portico was the only other publicly displayed statue of a historical woman, previous to the grant of statues given to Octavia and Livia.<sup>326</sup> This statue was of

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<sup>324</sup> Woodhull 2003, 22 n.24.

<sup>325</sup> Boyd 1953, 152; Woodhull 2003, 22 n.24. There are modern ruins of the restored portico from 203.

<sup>326</sup> Written sources attest to other female statues, but these statues are all of legendary women, not historical women like Cornelia. See Hemelrijk 2005b, 310-11.

Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi.<sup>327</sup> The statue, which had resided previously inside the portico of Metellus, portrayed Cornelia in a seated position and, most remarkable to Pliny, Cornelia had no straps on her shoes (Plin. *NH* 34.31). And indeed, the inscribed base of this statue was found inside the remains of Octavia's portico.<sup>328</sup> Curiously, it appears that underneath the found inscription are remnants of a previous, and unfortunately, unreadable inscription. This, in combination with the strapless sandals, has led scholars to surmise that perhaps the statue was not originally Cornelia, but was instead a god or goddess which was re-made and re-inscribed to be Cornelia by Octavian in an effort to have a historical precedent to harken back to, lessening the impact of the novel grant of statues to Octavia and Livia.<sup>329</sup>

The argument is convincing, but I would like to alter it slightly. Hemelrijk believes this re-purposing of an older statue to be the work of Octavian because she believes Octavia's portico is merely dedicated to Octavia by her brother Octavian, rather than built by Octavia herself.<sup>330</sup> As I believe Octavia was indeed the patroness of her own portico, I would suggest that it was Octavia, not her brother, who had the statue re-fashioned to serve as Cornelia. Octavia's time in Greece would have exposed her to the honorific statues of elite women, and she was well acquainted with how easily Roman

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<sup>327</sup> See Dixon 2007 for a full biography of Cornelia.

<sup>328</sup> *CIL* 6, 31610.

<sup>329</sup> Hemelrijk 2005b, 313-314 following Ruck. Pliny, our classical source on Cornelia's statue, is writing later and so should be forgiven for his mistake. He would have only seen the re-fashioned version of the statue.

<sup>330</sup> Hemelrijk 2005b, 314.

propriety could be offended by non-traditional moves by women.<sup>331</sup> A statue of the historic mother Cornelia would lend Republican tradition to Octavia's portico which was novel in that it was built by a woman and even more so because it was built in a traditionally male area of Rome, the Campus Martius. This area of Rome served as the staging ground for armies as well as the traditional area to erect triumphal monuments celebrating military victories.<sup>332</sup>

Octavia's portico and role as patroness in a male-dominated architectural landscape should be seen as a "critical link" in Octavian's developing dynastic program.<sup>333</sup> If Octavian's long-term goal was to have his bloodline succeed him, he would need to highlight the female members of his family.<sup>334</sup> Yet, as mentioned previously, his demonization of Cleopatra in propaganda would not allow him to highlight women of his family flagrantly. Octavia, then, was the perfect woman to promote his fledgling dynastic program. She had already broken into the traditionally male realm of politics during the triumvirate, but had done so within the traditional female Republican framework of a *matrona*. And further, she had been touted as the anti-Cleopatra. Octavia had entered the masculine public stage, but she had retained her femininity, unlike her predecessor Fulvia.

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<sup>331</sup> Hemelrijk 2005b, 325 gives these two reasons to explain why Octavian would re-fashion the statue, but I feel they are even more fitted to Octavia's knowledge base.

<sup>332</sup> Woodhull 2003, 23.

<sup>333</sup> Woodhull 2003, 22.

<sup>334</sup> Kampen 1991 generally, 191 specifically. Kampen's article argues that mortal women begin to appear in public art when dynastic intentions are being highlighted.



Consequently, Octavia's portico, positioned on the traditionally male Campus Martius, entered the masculine public landscape of Rome in an acceptable extension of feminine Republican values in the same way Octavia's involvement in triumviral politics was an acceptable extension of the Republican woman's role as mediator and negotiator. Her portico housed libraries dedicated to her son, highlighting her fecundity and motherhood by emphasizing her role in the education to her son.<sup>335</sup> The artwork displayed inside also focused on her role as a mother, with Cornelia as the historic example which underlined the traditional role Octavia embodied.<sup>336</sup> Importantly, "her [Octavia's] patronal actions participated in a broader discourse on the proper actions of a Roman matron and linked Octavia to a noble heritage of republican predecessors."<sup>337</sup>

While her brother sought to transform the Roman Republic into something new, something which resembled the Republic but with the real power concentrated in one man, Octavia sought to embody the prototype of the virtuous woman who would eventually support that one man in power. Livia would be the first Empress of Rome, but

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<sup>335</sup> The brief mention above in *Ov. Ars Am.* 1.69-70 seems to imply that Octavia was originally assisted by her son in the construction of the portico. Woodhull 2003, 24-25 notes that other prominent benefactions by women included their sons as a way for elite women to promote their sons political careers. This could certainly have been the case with Octavia and Marcellus, as he appeared well on his way to a prominent place in Roman politics. Woodhull 2003, 28-32 further explores the library as a fitting memorial for the dead, and, on 30, as a way "Octavia gave public face to a profoundly intimate loss." To my mind, this further disproves Seneca's claim that Octavia shut herself away following the death of Marcellus.

<sup>336</sup> Woodhull 2003, 25-28 details the connections between the aforementioned artwork within Octavia's portico and traditional female virtues.

<sup>337</sup> Woodhull 2003, 32.

Octavia was the one who transformed the role of women so that Livia could be accepted as and excel in this novel role as empress.

## CONCLUSION

### **Octavia's Lasting Legacy and the *exemplum* of Empress**

As I have alluded to throughout this thesis, Livia, Octavian's wife and Octavia's sister-in-law, is widely acknowledged as the first Empress of Rome.<sup>338</sup> I have no disagreement with this conclusion, and would like to add a complementary conclusion of my own: Octavia was the prototype for the role of empress in Rome, throughout the Julio-Claudian dynasty generally, but specifically for her sister-in-law Livia.

Throughout this thesis it has been shown that Octavia frequently broke ground when it came to women's political involvement, as seen during the triumviral years, and the public image of a Roman *matrona*, which began in the triumviral years but continued into the early years of the principate until her death in 11. Octavia stepped into the political realm as an extension of her private role as Roman *matrona* most famously at Tarentum, but also many times in the years which followed, leading up to Octavian's confrontation with Antony at Actium. Octavia's genuine public performance of motherhood in taking both Fulvia's and Cleopatra's children into her house is another example of Octavia's private role as matron writ large in the public realm. Livia, as well as Octavia's daughter Antonia Minor, would later display similar public performances of motherhood by taking in children who were not their own and raising them within their households.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Barrett 2001 even subtitles his monograph on Livia "First Lady of Imperial Rome."; Dennison 2010 titles his biography *Livia, Empress of Rome*.

<sup>339</sup> Fischler 1994, 123-124. Mentioned previously in n. 208.

Octavia's moral example of the proper public persona of Roman *matrona* was taken up and used by Livia throughout her time as the leading woman in Rome. Livia, who so scandalously began her marriage to Octavian still pregnant with her divorced husband's child and who sat at Octavian's side during his derided "dinner of the twelve gods" (Suet. *Aug.* 69-70). After such a rocky start to her public life at Octavian's side, it is somewhat surprising that by the end of her life Livia was so well-respected as an *exemplum* of Roman womanhood. I believe this is in large part due to Livia aligning her later behavior to follow Octavia's well-respected example. Livia curtailed such decadent displays as the "dinner of the twelve gods" and instead put herself forward as Octavian's match in the traditional Roman role of wife, such as, along with Octavia, making her husband Octavian's clothes (Suet. *Aug.* 73).<sup>340</sup>

I would like to turn to some of the buildings Livia constructed as patroness to support my conclusion.<sup>341</sup> Two of Livia's most famous monuments are her Shrine to Concordia which was housed within the Portico of Livia.<sup>342</sup> It is immediately striking that Livia erected a shrine to the virtue of *concordia*, a virtue tightly linked to Octavia during the triumviral period when she was first emerging onto the public stage. Additionally, it can be compared to Octavia's portico which housed a temple to Juno, one of the

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<sup>340</sup> As the aforementioned biographies n. 338 discuss Livia's public persona in much detail, I limit myself here to brief examples. See also the salient Purcell 1986.

<sup>341</sup> Woodhull 1999, 67-130 explores Octavia and Livia together as "Building Models." This doctoral dissertation was invaluable to me while writing my thesis, but I must disagree that Livia and Octavia should be studied only in tandem. I believe that Octavia should be considered the prototype and Livia the masterful appropriator, even though Octavia only contributed a single building.

<sup>342</sup> Flory 1984 explores the construction of both monuments.

goddesses whose special purview included women. Livia's portico (and thus the shrine inside) were built as public monuments on what was previously the private and opulent estate of Vedius. After Vedius's death, Octavian had his estate razed to the ground as an example to curtail private extravagance.<sup>343</sup> Thus, Livia's buildings were assisting Octavian's monumental building program by decorating a newly made public space with monuments committed to her private feminine virtues of *concordia* and motherhood, as Livia dedicated her portico alongside her son Tiberius (Dio 55.8.1). Octavia had paved the way for such monuments with female patrons with her own portico on the Campus Martius.

Livia's assumption of the mantle Octavia left behind is so evident that Purcell notes in his discussion of Livia that:

The moral rectitude of the matrona was something much more than being loyal, subservient, faithful, obliging...for womanly virtue at Rome had a truly public face, and should not be dismissed as if it were simply domestic goodness of so striking a kind that the state occasionally condescended to notice it.<sup>344</sup>

Here is Octavia's lasting contribution to Roman history. Octavia is the woman who paved the way for such things to be said of Livia. Octavia, during the period which "triumvirate and civil war changed the political importance of the Roman household, both by driving triumviral politics into the private spaces of the Roman home and by drawing Roman women into the public spheres of forum and diplomatic embassy"<sup>345</sup> was the model of this transformation. It was Octavia who navigated the public (and often-

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<sup>343</sup> Flory 1984, 325.

<sup>344</sup> Purcell 1986, 82.

<sup>345</sup> Cluett 1998, 71.

times demonstrably hostile to women) realm in such a way that allowed her to emerge into the principate and posterity unscathed as the “good” Roman *matrona*. Yet this thesis has shown it was not Octavia’s “goodness” which allowed her to assist her brother Octavian in the remaking of the Roman world, but was instead her sagacity gained from observation and measured response to the people and events taking place around, and to, her.

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