

When one thinks of Livia, a number of images immediately come to mind, but typically the first is the image of a domineering, devious mother, ready to advance her son Tiberius to power by any means necessary. This image has been crafted by ancient historians, such as Tacitus and Cassius Dio, and is embodied in Robert Graves' memorable characterization in *I, Claudius*. These authors implicate Livia in just about every death in the imperial family during the Augustan age, and have depicted the relationship between Tiberius and Livia as acrimonious. They have been influential, and continue to be influential, in interpreting Livia and defining her place in imperial discourse. This paper offers a reassessment of this (in)famous character, focusing on the work of Ovid, the one poet who includes her so prominently in his texts and characterizes her so differently than these later treatments. My paper examines how Ovid portrays Livia's relationship with Tiberius and how his depiction relates to the ways the relationship was presented to the Roman people and the role she played in late Augustan and early Tiberian ideology.

Despite articles such as Purcell (1986), Ovid's characterization of Livia in his exile literature is still considered problematic. Scholars (such as Syme 1978, Herbert-Brown 1994, Barrett 2002) have retrojected later historical characterizations of Livia onto readings of Ovid's Livia, interpreting her presence in the exile literature as a miscalculation and an outright mistake by Ovid. However, when Ovid's characterization is placed in the broader context of epigraphic, artistic and numismatic evidence from the period, I reveal that, far from being extraordinary or an affront to imperial sensibilities, Ovid accurately reflects Livia's role in public affairs and her depiction in other forms of official discourse.

Ovid's exile literature provides evidence for Livia's continuing, evolving role in the language of imperial discourse and for the central role she played in the imagery and language describing succession. Ovid builds upon prior depictions of Livia primarily in two contexts, as spouse of Augustus (e.g. *Tr.* I.6.26) and mother of Tiberius (e.g. *Tr.* IV.2.11). Over time, Ovid's poems illustrate a melding of these two roles, as Livia comes to embody the link between Augustus and his successor Tiberius (e.g. *Pont.* II.8.4), filling the void created by the exile of Julia.

Just as important, the animosity Tacitus and Dio report between Tiberius and Livia is absent from Ovid. The historical record supports his characterization. Rather than disappearing from the public scene following the succession of Tiberius, Livia continues to be an important presence in Tiberian ideology. For this reason, Ovid's poems, along with other extant sources, such as the *Senatus Consultum Pisonianum*, provide a counterweight to later accounts of this important historical figure, attesting to her power and role as an intercessor with the *princeps*, whether Augustus or Tiberius.

The paper closes with a consideration of Ovid's repeated allusions to Livia's divinity (e.g. *Pont.* I.4.56, *Fasti* I.536), which are often considered problematic, arguing that Ovid's depiction is consistent with the presentation in other forms of public discourse and represents an appropriate literary extension of statements about Augustus' own divinity.