

Imperial Women and Travels:

A case study after the journeys of four imperial women in the first and second century AD.

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Introduction

Emperor Augustus was the one who inaugurated the Julio-Claudian dynasty, which lasted from 27BC until 68AD. After Augustus, five emperors followed him in the line of succession. These emperors were: Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero.

The Nerva-Antonine dynasty on the other hand, was a dynasty of seven Roman emperors who ruled from AD96 to 192. This was a period during which, according to Edward Gibbon, ‘the vast extent of the Roman Empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom’.¹ The most important characteristic of this dynasty, is that the reigning emperor used to adopt the candidate of his choice to be his successor, with the exception of Commodus, the biological son of Marcus Aurelius. But what do we know though, about the women of these dynasties?

It is well known, that these women had a really important role to play, as they stood behind their husbands and helped them create their ‘myth’. Furthermore, it is written that the imperial women of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty held a more prominent place in public life compared to the Julio-Claudians. But in general, they were supposed to be restricted in the *domus*, taking care of their husband and children.

Through sources, however, we learn that the Julio-Claudian and the Nerva-Antonine women used to travel as well, accompanying their husbands in the public sphere, joining them to wars or other occasions in the west as well as in the east. This particular activity created debate among men, on whether it was right for a woman to travel or not, considering the complications that

¹ Barbara Levick, *Faustina I and II: Imperial Women of the Golden Age*, Oxford (2014), 8.

came with their presence. Based on this debate more questions arise on the role of these women during these travels. Did they act according to the *matrona* style while they were away from Rome and more importantly why did they even travel?

Much has been written about travel in the ancient world. Lionel Casson is one of the main scholars on travelling in history. He published the: 'Travel in the Ancient World (1994)', analyzing what kind of people used to travel and for which purpose, how people of the ancient world were able to travel, and which means they used to achieve it. Yet, there is a gap in modern literature about women in Roman times, and above all, women of imperial status and their travels.

A lot has been written also, on female behavior and how women were perceived in Roman antiquity. Both Lien Foubert in her: 'Women Going Public (2010)' and S.Fishler in his: 'Social Stereotypes and historical analysis. The case of the Imperial Women at Rome', from the 'Women in Ancient Societies (1994)', said that an upper-class woman, otherwise a *matrona*, was supposed to have a certain behavior in order to be accepted from the Romans.

Moreover, most of the ancient sources indicated that a woman should remain restricted in the *domus* (private sphere), which was considered their 'natural' place to be. What is more, S, Dixon goes further on this research, and speaks of the private and public sphere and of the expected women's behavior in his work: 'Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life, (2001)'. As a conclusion, Dixon phrased that a Roman woman was supposed to stay at home restricted from the public sphere. In addition, S.Fishler (1994) also wrote about the basic morals

(We will mention the basic morals in chapter one), which a Roman woman should bare, according to the *matrona* stereotype.²

Yet, these studies do not provide any more information on imperial women and their travels. Recently, Lien Foubert, in her article: ‘The Impact of Women’s Travels On Military Imagery In The Julio-Claudian Period (2009)’, gives an insight into the theme, but she focuses on the Julio-Claudian period only. In this article, she remarks that imperial women of the Julio-Claudian dynasty used to join their husbands to military or diplomatic campaigns or even just visited other places. However, as we said before, her study’s limitation does not refer to the women of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty.

Additionally, for the Nerva-Antonine dynasty, Barbara Levick in her work: ‘Faustina I and II’ (2014), gave a detailed overview of their lives, their character and general impact, but did not explicitly analyze their travels. Finally, Jasper Burns in his recent book: ‘Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars (2007)’, wrote short biographies of most of the imperial women, including their travels. Yet, he mostly focused on their husband’s travels, and as a consequence, he added in which of the trips each imperial woman was present. Moreover, he did not go into detail about the main reasons of these travels, and more specifically from the women’s perspective.

Now, we should also mention some main things that have been written so far about the *matrona* stereotype. First of all, one of the most important works is the: ‘Matrona Docta, Educated women in the Roman elite from Cornelia to Julia Domna (2004)’, by Emily Ann Hemelrijk. This work focuses on the education of the Roman *matronas*. It also gives an insight to the role of upper-

² S.Fishler, ‘Social Stereotypes and historical analysis. The case of the Imperial Women at Rome’, in S. FISCHLER et al.(eds.), *Women in Ancient Societies. An Illusion of the Night* (New York, 1994), 115-133.

class women towards literature. It concludes that their part in this field was minor, with the exception of some specific women, who were mentioned as well in ancient sources for their literacy. Furthermore, we can find information on the expected behavior and ethics of a Roman *matrona*.

E. Hemelrijk summarizes that their social status was not stable. On the one hand they were restricted in their homes, as the *matrona* standard required, but on the other hand, because of their relationship with powerful men, they could also appear in the public life, sometimes causing impact on the social or even on the political sphere. This conclusion could be an indication to their presence outside Rome for military or diplomatic purposes.

Next, R.F Saller in his work: 'Familia Domus and the Roman conception of the Family' (1984), links the *domus* to the Roman *matrona* as her natural environment and underlines how important was the private sphere for these women. He also mentions that imperial women like Livia maintained the *dignitas* of their house. However, in this work there is no clear mention on the participation of the *matronas* in the public domain. Additionally, Paul Chrystal through his work: 'Roman Women: The Women who influenced the History of Rome' (2015), explains that the *matrona* stereotype described perfectly how a Roman woman was back then. She was the one who held the family united and was responsible for her household.

What is more, Lien Foubert gives a detailed description of the *matrona* standard not only in her book: 'Women Going Public', but also in her article: 'The Lure of an Exotic Destination: the politics of women's travels in the early Roman Empire (2017). From this article we understand that a *matrona* could either accompany her husband to some trips, mostly for matters of the state, or she could stay restricted at home. But, we do not find any exceptions on the reasons of their departure, except from their public role, which sometimes made them abandon the private

domain. Finally, we do not know if the *matronas* had the possibility to travel alone without a guardian.

To sum up, with everything that has been mentioned so far, up until now most of the modern writers focused on men's travels and wrote only a little about women. On the other hand, modern literature discusses female behavior, imperial women's role in matters of power and their social status in antiquity. However, modern writers do not further analyze women travelling. And if one talks about imperial women, then they mostly refer to the travels they accompanied their imperial husbands. There is not much recent literature on the specific topic. And especially, there is no mention on the reasons why imperial women travelled, other than that they joined their husbands, so as to help them solve crucial matters of the state, or that they decided to travel out of curiosity.

The present thesis will try to solve this specific problem and fill the gap of imperial women and the reasons of their travels. Therefore, the research question of my paper will be: *For which reasons did the imperial women of the Julio-Claudian and the Nerva-Antonine dynasty travel during the first and second century AD?* My research topic will take four case studies of selected imperial women from the Julio-Claudian and the Nerva-Antonine dynasty. These selected imperial women will be used as examples of what women of the time used to do in terms of travelling. Of course, there is great variation of activities in their behavior, but more or less, these four women represent the majority of what imperial women of Rome used to do.

In addition, from this early stage we could assume that all imperial women travelled. Some more than others. Then, we will compare them in matters of travelling and finally, we will try to show if the chosen imperial women acted based on the *matrona* symbol or not. And if they did not, then was there a different attitude-stereotype initiated through their travels?

I chose Livia and Agrippina Maior from the Julio-Claudian dynasty and Pompeia Plotina with Faustina the Younger from the Nerva-Antonine dynasty. All of them are Roman empresses except for Agrippina, who was a direct descendant of Augustus, and her family was next in line of the imperial succession. Therefore, she was also an imperial woman. Why did I choose these particular women? First of all, because all of them were powerful and influenced politics in the Roman Empire. And secondly, because these women travelled in different ways and frequency.

In the present thesis, I will analyze, compare and interpret the ancient sources and the existing modern literature with each other, using literary sources. The distinction between public and private sphere will be dominant. Furthermore, the model of *matrona*, the ideal woman will be a basic element of the research into these imperial women's lives and travels. Additionally, further sub-questions will occur such as: what was the status of these women as they travelled, did they move to the west or to the east, what was their role during these trips and did they travelled alone or exclusively in the company of their husbands?

I expect, that by analyzing the ancient sources and collecting the most 'precious' information from the modern literature, I will be able to go deeper in the purposes of why these imperial women travelled. I will also try to see these women as individuals. There will be a thorough discussion and analysis of the political and military impact of these travels in connection to their husbands. Finally, I will demonstrate the comparisons between the chosen women of the two dynasties and I will analyze the differences on the prime reasons of their travelling.

Furthermore, I will present in the following, the most basic ancient sources that will be used in this research. Various ancient sources like Tacitus' *Annals* or Suetonius' *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, provide crucial information on Julio-Claudian women, their lives and travels. For the

Nerva-Antonine dynasty, we have Cassius Dio (*Roman History*), Pliny's *Letters* and even the controversial text of *Historia Augusta* to search for information concerning their travels.

To start with, Publius Cornelius Tacitus was born in AD 56 and died in AD 120. He was the greatest historian of the ancient Rome and a member of the senate. His two most important texts are the *Annals* and the *Histories*. In the present thesis, the work of the *Annals* will be used extensively. The *Annals* is a narration of the history of the Roman Empire from the reign of Augustus' successor, Tiberius until the death of Nero. It is the last text Tacitus ever wrote and it is considered to be the most important. Furthermore, it is compiled of at least sixteen books, yet some of them have not survived³. Perhaps Tacitus is the best source for the Julio-Claudian dynasty. He is also said to have been impartial in his writings and really capable of presenting various information. When we read what Tacitus wrote about Roman women, we come to the conclusion that he was not really fond of the powerful ones, who wanted to have the Roman Empire under their control. On the one hand, he has been characterized as hostile towards women but on the other hand he appreciated their bravery.⁴ Also, he focused more on men's actions and behavior when they travelled and not so much on women's presence and reason to be with their husbands. Finally, Tacitus believed that women were the weaker sex, therefore incapable of participating in the public sphere and interfering to men's life. These are aspects that we have to be aware of, when analyzing the travels of the imperial women.

Next, there is Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, who is said to have been born around AD 69 in Africa, and died after AD 122. He was also a Roman historian, who is mostly remembered for his work: '*De Vita Caesarum, The Life of the Caesars*'. He wrote the biographies of the Roman Emperors, starting from Julius Caesar and until Domitian. Through his work, he gave a detailed

³ A.J Woodman, Tacitus, The Annals, Indianapolis, (2004) ix-xi.

⁴ Anthony Barrett, Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome, Yale (2004), 239-243.

description of important events that went down to history, such as the Great Fire of Rome, or Augustus' building program of the city of Rome.⁵ In his biographies, he mentioned women only to describe their influence on each emperor. However, we cannot say that he was against imperial women in any way.⁶

To continue with, Cassius Dio was a Roman historian with Greek origin, who was born in AD 155 in Bithynia and died in AD 135. He wrote the well-known *Roman History*, which starts from Aeneas' coming to Italy and covers the period until AD 229. The *Roman History* was written in Greek and entails 1000 years of Roman events. In his work, he mostly just mentioned facts, but he did not go into further details and analysis. We find quite a lot of information about the Julio-Claudian and the Nerva-Antonine women, scattered throughout his text.⁷

Moreover, Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* (*τα εις εαυτόν*), is a really crucial source for our research, since it was written by the emperor Marcus Aurelius himself, from AD 161 to 180 and it entails personal thoughts and information in Stoic philosophy. This source has twelve books, all written in Greek, when Marcus Aurelius was fighting at the Balkan borders in Sirmium. The philosopher-emperor had no intention of publishing his work, given the fact that through his written personal thoughts, he tried to realize the meaning of the universe and to discover himself as well.⁸ Finally, apart from the philosophical content, we also get a glimpse of his life and actions and more importantly, about his travels with his wife Faustina the Younger.

To finish, we will also use *Historia Augusta* in this thesis. It is a Latin source, compiled of various biographies of the Roman Emperors and usurpers. It is said that it comes from multiple

⁵ Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Catharine Edwards, Oxford (2000), vii-xiii.

⁶ Anthony Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome*, Yale (2004), 236-237.

⁷ *Ibid*, 237-238.

⁸ Anthony Birley, *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography* (London, 2000), 211-214.

backgrounds and some believe that there were six different authors who wrote *Historia Augusta*. It is considered as a controversial text, for there have been debates for the actual date of compilation, and whether there was one or more authors. Some scholars even question the authenticity of the content and wonder whether it is manufactured.⁹ Ronald Syme described it as ‘the most enigmatic work that Antiquity has transmitted’.

Nevertheless, recently, more credits is given to the *Historia Augusta* manuscript, making it a valuable instrument-source for our thesis’ scope of analysis.¹⁰ Therefore, we can extract a lot of useful information for the present research. This is why it is mentioned quite a lot of times, in order to analyze the lives and travels of the women of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty and their husbands.

⁹ <http://www.livius.org/sources/about/historia-augusta/>.

¹⁰ D.W.P. Burgersdijk, *Style and Structure of the Historia Augusta* (2010).

Chapter one

Travel during Roman Times and Women's Expected Behavior

In this chapter, we will address two topics related to our thesis subject on travelling imperial women. Firstly, we will analyze the travel in Roman period and secondly, the social accepted behavior of Roman women. To begin with the travel, we will try to discover if it was easy for Roman people to travel during the first-second century AD. Then, we will mention if they travelled by land, by sea or if they used to travel in both ways. And finally, we will indicate the basic reasons of their travels and of course, what kind of people used to travel back then. Was it customary for everyone even for the ones that were not of noble origin to leave their homes and explore the world?

Furthermore, after discussing about travel in general, there will be a sub-chapter, that will focus on the representation of imperial women during the first and second century AD. These topics form the basis of the present paper, since we will try to see, analyze and explore what kind of travel destinations were common in Roman times and whether or not imperial women transgressed the social expected behavior when they travelled. Furthermore, we will introduce the basic ideas of the *matrona* symbol, the *public* and *private* sphere in Rome, and how men used to see women. Which one was the ideal behavior for a woman in the first and second century and what happened in real life?

Travel during Roman Times

The Roman Emperors built great walls and created military camps, which protected the Roman Empire from any foreign invasion. Also, the Roman fleet protected the Mediterranean Sea from pirates. That way, during the first and second century AD, travelers could move quite easily and without being interrupted throughout the Roman Empire.¹¹ The only thing that was necessary for people *en route*, in order to travel, was some Roman money.¹² What is more, Greek and Latin were the two common languages, that were necessary and helped anyone who wanted to travel respectively in the east and the west.

Furthermore, travels and trade were made inside and outside of the Roman Empire. Even to Scotland or west of the Canary Islands. It is also important to mention, that the Roman army was the one that expanded the Roman boundaries, allowing merchants and travelers to see more of the world. Finally, during the first and second century AD, there were more travelers, merchants and military people crossing the Roman Empire than ever before, moving either by land or by sea.¹³

But what kind of people used to travel back in Roman times and which of them travelled the most? Also, for which reasons did these people make the decision to travel? Apart from traveling for sightseeing and meeting the world, it is estimated that merchants and officers-magistrates travelled mostly, in order to fulfil the basic requirements of their jobs. Yet, they were not the only ones!¹⁴

¹¹ Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore and London, 1994), 143-144.

¹² For more information on Roman coins see: John Anthony Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (London, 1967), 283-285.

¹³ Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore and London, 1994), 143-150.

¹⁴ For information on trade see: J.Thomson, *History of Ancient Geography* (Cambridge, 1948), 298-301 and J.Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1969), 119-136.

There were also people who travelled because of health issues. For example, doctors like Celsus recommended trips, more particularly sea trips, as a way of treatment. Moreover, people used to travel so as to visit famous sanctuaries in Greece, Asia Minor or Rome. These sanctuaries predicted the future and in a way helped them (Roman people) to solve their everyday problems.¹⁵ Another reason for travel was the event of the Olympic Games or other sport games in Greece. Also there were many, who visited Rome in order to participate or see the Games that were organized by the Roman Emperors, especially during the second century AD. For instance, gladiator fights were used to attract large crowds as audiences.¹⁶

Additionally, Romans had the tendency to leave Rome for vacations. For instance, every noble Roman used to have two kinds of residencies, which were meant for leisure time.¹⁷ They had one, that was near the sea and they used it as a summer house, and another one, which was near the mountains, for the colder months. It is crucial to mention that people from all the social strata used to go for vacations, not only the nobles or the rich ones.¹⁸

Finally, we could also mention that Romans preferred to travel by land rather than sea. It was their belief, that they were not in danger as long as they travelled by land crossing the Roman Empire. But anything could happen when they had to sail.¹⁹ There were even farewell poems for their friends who travelled by sea, as they were almost sure that they (Romans) would not see them again.²⁰ These poems showed their prevailing anxiety and fear for sea travels.

¹⁵ Lionel Casson, 151-170.

¹⁶ For Games and gladiators see: John Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (Michigan, 1974), 244-339, this is an edited version of Balsdon 1969.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 193-213.

¹⁸ Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore and London, 1994), 151-170.

¹⁹ Lionel Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (Baltimore and London, 1995), 204, this is an edited version of Casson 1971.

²⁰ Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore and London, 1994), 151-170.

To conclude, we already mentioned above, that Roman people from all kinds of backgrounds used to travel especially for holidays. What is more, officers travelled the most. There were also some who travelled to see the world or go to distinguished sanctuaries. Moreover, health was an important reason for voyaging and most importantly, Olympic Games or gladiator fighting attracted a lot of people.

Women's Expected Behavior

When we study about the Roman world, we find a division made between the *public* and the *private* sphere. These two groups divide the social and the public life.²¹ Also scholars usually combine the meanings *public* with an exterior place and *private* with an interior.²² Subsequently, Romans made use of the words *forum* and *domus* in order to achieve the distinction mentioned above. The *forum* used to be the center of Rome's political power. This is why it represented the public domain, which was the ideal place for men. On the other hand, the *domus* had the meaning of the natural home for a family, therefore it stood for the private life and it was dedicated to women.²³ However, these two different domains, sometimes in practice, were one and the same thing. For example, when Roman women used to go public and did not act according to the ideal or expected behavior, according to the *matrona* style. So, since the dichotomy between *private* and *public* was not fixed, collisions were created quite frequently.²⁴

Before mentioning what could occur when these domains collided, we should first introduce the *matrona* symbol, which is essential for our research. To begin with, Roman society created an

²¹ K.Milnor, *Gender, Domesticity, and the Age of Augustus. Inventing Private Life* (Oxford, 2005).

²² S.Dixon, *Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life* (London 2001), 113-132.

²³ For more information on the *domus* and its meanings see: Saller, R.F.' *Familia Domus and the Roman conception of the Family*, *Phoenix* 38, (1984), 342-348.

²⁴ Lien Foubert, *Women Going Public, Ideals and conflicts in the representation of Julio-Claudian women* (Nijmegen, 2010), 7,39.

ideal standard, the *matrona* ideal, according to which every woman should act. More specifically, women should behave according to the *matrona* standard and remain isolated to the *domus*, or more specifically to the private domain.²⁵ It is also crucial to mention that a Roman woman could bare the title *matrona* only after her marriage. The *matrona* symbol was also identified as a status which involved a woman of high class, who was married to a noble man. This symbol indicated how she was supposed to behave as a wife and a mother, but also how her character in general was supposed to be. In other words, which morals was she supposed to have. Some of these morals were: *modestia, pudicitia, obsequium*.²⁶

Finally, the perfect *matrona* should also wear the ideal dress as well! Since clothes could show someone's character or intensions, women had to wear tunics. These specific clothes indicated a woman's social status or place. The tunics could be either short or long. For instance, a long tunic showed that the woman who was wearing it was a noble and rich one.²⁷

Moreover, we also find the word *exempla* when we study about imperial women. We can trace this word in Tacitus writings for example, and it means that by using examples from the past, we are then able to understand the present and maybe control the future. These examples can be either mythological or historical. As time passed by, female *exempla*, as well as counter *exempla* were used quite frequently. In fact, Roman women had to behave based on these and if they did so, they could be identified as the perfect *matronas*.²⁸

²⁵ For more information on what Roman women used to do concerning the *public* and *private* sphere see: S.Dixon, Reading Roman Women. Sources, Genres and Real Life (London, 2001), 115.

²⁶ S.Fishler, 'Social Stereotypes and historical analysis. The case of the Imperial Women at Rome', in S. FISCHLER et al. (eds.), *Women in Ancient Societies. An Illusion of the Night* (New York, 1994), 115-133, See also: Lien Foubert, 'The lure of an exotic destination: the politics of women's travels in the early Roman Empire', *Hermes*, Volume 144 (2017), 1.

²⁷ K.Olson, Dress and the Roman Woman. Self-presentation and Society (London, 2008), 25.

²⁸ Lien Foubert, Women Going Public, Ideals and conflicts in the representation of Julio-Claudian women, (Nijmegen, 2010), 23-24.

But what happened when women did not act according to the *matrona* ideal? These women were criticized and judged as bad women, unworthy of this title.²⁹ Eventually, in late- Republic, women could appear and participate in the public sphere as well, since they were often preoccupied with political, religious or even economic matters. More specifically, from the time of Augustus onwards, it was usual for upper-class women to accompany their husbands or other family members outside from the Italian peninsula for military or diplomatic purposes. How did men saw women's public participation-appearance? We can say that this tendency caused controversy and even fear among men. Some of them, like Caecina Severus tried to demonstrate how a Roman woman was supposed to be. So, based on Tacitus writings we have this passage:

*Multum ante repetito concordem sibi coniugem et sex partus enixam, seque quae in publicum statueret domi servavisse, cohibita intra Italiam, quamquam ipse pluris per provincias quadraginta stipendia explevisset.*³⁰

In this passage, Caecina Severus explains his position towards women travelling abroad and behaving differently from the usual restrictions. He states, that women should be restricted at least within the borders of the Italian peninsula, and this is what his wife did. She never joined him abroad. This is why she was a perfect *matrona* and their marriage entailed *concordia*, meaning it was ideal. Moreover, Caecina Severus believed that women in general who acted against the *matrona* standard, created problems to the existing natural order that Roman life was established. Furthermore, these women were weak and emotional, therefore incapable of taking

²⁹ Ibid, 32.

³⁰ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.33.1, He had previously retraced at some length his own spouse's harmony with himself and her six childbirths and the fact that what he was establishing for the public good he had already observed at home, having restricted her to within Italy although he himself had fulfilled forty years' service across several provinces. (Translation from Woodman, 2004).

serious decisions.³¹ They were even considered less clever compared to men.³² In Caecina's view, women were characterized as obstacles when they joined military campaigns. They were thought to corrupt men and create problems among them.³³ In addition, men were of course in a better situation, superior to women. Since women were in fact the weak sex and usually were overwhelmed by their emotions.³⁴

Caecina's theory summarizes what most of the ancient authors thought of women and their travels. We can assume that they accepted women travelling, but could not accept their influence towards men. Perhaps, women according to ancient sources were meant to accompany their husbands only for support and nothing more.

According to Tacitus, a man could have two choices concerning his wife. He could either take her with him in military or diplomatic expeditions, or he could leave her back at home according to the stereotypes. So, there are two opinions for this matter, and what we can say from this preliminary stage, is that women could act based on their will or their husband's choice.

At this point, we should also explain the word *concordia* that was used above. This word used to indicate the peace and well-being between a husband and a wife. For example based on Tacitus, Augustus and Livia depicted the ideal of *concordia* as a couple. This is also why they were used as *exemplum* for the perfect harmony and behavior between them.³⁵

Moreover, it is interesting to notice that ancient writers apart from the distinction between *private* and *public*, used others as well. Rome was mentioned in contrast to the provinces, or

³¹ Livy, *Exemplary History*, 3.48.8.

³² Lien Foubert, 'The lure of an exotic destination: the politics of women's travels in the early Roman Empire', *Hermes*, Volume 144 (2017), 8.

³³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.33.

³⁴ J.W. Messerschmidt, 'The struggle for heterofeminine recognition: bullying, embodiment, and reactive sexual offending by adolescent girls', *Feminist Criminology* 6 (2011), 206-207.

³⁵ B. Severy, *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire* (New York-London, 2003), 131-138.

modestia existed on the one hand and on the other was *luxuria*. All these, were used to explain the behavior of women who participated in the public sphere. So, we can speculate that the sources really tried to form the distinction between the world of men and the world of women, in order to show the large differences between the two sexes in the Roman times.

To conclude with, there should also be a reference to the stereotype of the *dux femina*. It was used quite frequently from the first century BC. A *dux femina* was a high-class woman, who interfered with the military sphere and tried to gather power in her hands. This stereotype described the tendency of upper-class women to join their husbands to the provinces and intrude to the military life. What is more, this word could have either negative or positive meaning. For example, in Agrippina's (Maior) case, describing her as a *dux femina*, was a depiction of a positive aspect of her character-behavior, whereas the negative side of this stereotype, was when women tried to look like men by dressing up accordingly, or even when they were holding weapons.³⁶

To sum up, there has been a thorough discussion in this chapter about the basic symbols-stereotypes that will be mentioned in our research. We saw the main reasons of why Roman people in general used to travel. Especially, we were introduced with the *matrona* symbol, the *dux femina* stereotype and the distinction between *private* and *public* sphere. All these, will occur several times in the next chapters. We already saw how women were supposed to behave according to these stereotypes but now, through our next three chapters, we will have a further insight of what really happened to the lives and travels of the four imperial women we have chosen for our research. Finally, we will next try to find and analyze the true and main reasons of their departure from their natural habitat.

³⁶ Lien Foubert, 'The Impact of Women's Travels On Military Imagery In The Julio-Claudian Period' (Nijmegen, 2009), 354-355.

Chapter 2

The Julio-Claudian Dynasty: Livia and Agrippina Maior

The Julio-Claudian dynasty was the dynasty that Augustus initiated in the second half of the first century until the death of the Emperor Nero in AD 68.³⁷ Five different emperors seized the power during this time and went down to history for their actions and deeds. These Emperors had to travel multiple times during these years. But what do we know about women and travel of the Julio-Claudian dynasty? It is true, that by the time of the Julio-Claudians, it was customary for women to accompany their husbands abroad for military or diplomatic purposes.³⁸ In this chapter, we will take Livia and Agrippina the Elder as examples to demonstrate why imperial women of the Julio-Claudian dynasty used to travel during the first-second century. First, we will discuss about Livia. Since there is not much written about her travels, we will make an attempt (by giving general information about her), to show how she was seen from her contemporaries and of course how she was depicted through the sources, in order to reach to the final conclusions why she travelled in the first place. Secondly, we will discuss about Agrippina the Elder, again we will briefly mention some general information about her, her husband and their relationship, and then we will analyze the different situations, which made her leave the *domus* and travel.

³⁷ <http://earlyworldhistory.blogspot.nl/2012/03/julio-claudian-emperors.html> .

³⁸ Plutarch, *Parallel Lives, Pompeius* 74. See also: Lien Foubert, 'The Impact of Women's Travels On Military Imagery In The Julio-Claudian Period' (Nijmegen, 2009), 349-351.

1) Livia

To begin with Livia, Augustus' wife, according to Dio Cassius, was a proud woman faithful to her husband and most importantly a worthy wife. They were both married when they met, Augustus was married to Scribonia and Livia to Tiberius Nero.³⁹ Livia was one of the most important and ruthless women of the ancient time.⁴⁰ According to the Roman poet Ovid, a contemporary to Livia, she had the beauty of Venu (the goddess of love) and the character of Juno (the queen of the Gods)'.⁴¹ She was born on January 30 of 58B.C. She married twice and her second marriage was the one with Augustus. They were both considered as *exempla* of the Roman husband and wife and they remained married for fifty years until Augustus' death in 14 C.E.⁴² According to Anthony Barrett, Augustus was already interested in Livia when he was with his previous wife. The most important thing though, was that he was already asking for her advice even then, when they were not married. Scribonia used to complain about Livia's *nimiam potentiam* (excessive power).⁴³ By all means, Livia was a woman loyal to her husband and perhaps she had the role of an old-fashioned wife. Many times she accompanied him to his travels throughout Italy and in the eastern and western provinces. Livia was a trustworthy wife and advisor.⁴⁴

But how was Livia depicted in the ancient sources and what information can we extract about her travels? To begin with, Suetonius in his work: *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, did not really mentioned a lot of things about her. She was more or less mentioned as a woman fit to become a

³⁹ Anthony Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* Yale (2004), 19-22.

⁴⁰ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴² Marjorie Lightman and Benjamin Lightman, *A To Z of Ancient Greek and Roman Women* (New York, 2008), 181-182.

⁴³ Anthony Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (Yale, 2004), 19-21.

⁴⁴ See: <http://www.roman-emperors.org/livia.htm>.

wife, but nevertheless ambitious.⁴⁵ Suetonius also claimed that she tried to manipulate Augustus's decisions but she did not interfere a lot in the political sphere. Secondly, there is an extensive report on Livia, scattered throughout Cassius Dio work. On the one hand, he thinks of her as a thoughtful and good advisor to Augustus but on the other hand, he mentions her possible interference to the deaths of Gaius and Lucius.⁴⁶ Finally it is believed, that Tacitus was in general hostile towards ambitious women of the imperial family of the Julio-Claudians.⁴⁷ Yet, he recognized that some of the women he described, had a glimpse of heroism. He saw Livia as a ruthless manipulator perhaps even capable of murder or conspiracy.⁴⁸ He even mentioned the possibility that Livia was the cause of Augustus's death by poisoning him with fresh figs.⁴⁹ What is more, he used the word *potential* to describe her improper power and influence over Augustus. Also the word *noverca* was used to demonstrate *her as a 'murderous' woman*.

The only proof of Livia's travels can be found in Tacitus's third book of the *Annals*, where in a debate on whether governor's wives are supposed to escort their husbands to the provinces, Drusus used Livia and Augustus as an *exemplum* of this tendency. More specifically:

*Addit pauca Drusus de matrimonio suo; nam principibus adeunda saepius longinqua imperii. Quoties divum Augustum in Occidentem atque Orientem meavisse comite Livia! Se quoque in Illyricum profectum et, si ita conducat, alias ad gentis iturum, haud semper aequo animo si ab uxore carissima et tot communium liberorum parente divelleretur.*⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars, Life Of Augustus*.

⁴⁶ Dio Cassius, *Roman History, Book LV. 10.a*.

⁴⁷ Tacitus, *Annals*.

⁴⁸ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.3, 1.6.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 1.6.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 3.34.

According to Drusus, Livia did accompany her husband in many expeditions in the West as well as in the East and that, was quite an interesting part of being an imperial woman and wife. Even if she ‘abandoned’ the *domus*, in other words her natural place to be, she did not cease to be a good wife or she did not neglect her duties. In fact that could be one of her responsibilities as well.⁵¹

So, based on ancient sources we cannot find much information about her travels or even why did she travel. Suetonius, Cassius Dio and Tacitus wrote about her character and her great influence on Augustus. Some of them, also mentioned gossip and bad rumors about her. What is more, all of the three writers mentioned the influence she had on Augustus maybe because they wanted to show that they were in general against powerful imperial women and in fact they were in favor of the ones who remained strict to the *matrona* stereotype.

Furthermore, the fact that we do not find much information about her travels may be an indication that the ancient sources took these trips as something customary for an imperial woman to do. However, the important thing is that in the third book of Tacitus, Drusus proves through his speech during the debate initiated from Severus Caecina that she travelled to many places. So, we can assume that she did travel along with Augustus in the provinces, firstly because it was one of her duties and secondly because she wanted to be with him and help him with the difficult matters of ruling. Most importantly, since all the sources agree that she had a great influence on Augustus and she wanted to control the ‘Empire’s issues’, that would be indeed the basic reason why she accompanied him in these travels.

⁵¹ Ibid, 3.34. See also: Lien Foubert, ‘The Impact of Women’s Travels On Military Imagery In The Julio-Claudian Period’ (Nijmegen, 2009), 353.

But what can we find on Livia's travels based on modern literature? According to Anthony Barrett, for the first 30 years of her marriage to Augustus, there is only a little evidence about her life. But after the death of Augustus's sister Octavia, Livia had a more important public role.

When Augustus was in charge of the provinces of Gaul and Spain he had to spend some time there. In the years of the republic the main role of the Roman woman was to wait for her husband (when he was away) while taking care of the house and his interests and welcome him when he returned. However, during the imperial period it was not rare for wives to follow their husbands to the provinces, sometimes even with the company of their children. Livia did escort Augustus occasionally and most probably to Gaul and Spain as well. Based on Seneca, she is said to have travelled to Ticinum to take the dead body of her son Drusus in 9BC (he fell from his horse during a campaign against the Germans and succumbed to his wounds), since she accompanied the funeral procession to Rome. She was also with Augustus when he took his last journey to Campania in AD 14 just before his own death. It is more that certain that she travelled in other places as well, although it is not recorded in the existing literature.⁵²

Furthermore, when Augustus was in Spain he was gravely ill and retired to Tarraco to rest. Livia must have been with her husband in this difficult moment of his life.⁵³ Also, according to Seneca she must have visited Gaul as mentioned above, as she was supposed to have had an argument with Augustus concerning the right of citizenship to a Gaul.

Additionally, in 22 BC Augustus travelled to the eastern provinces for three years and most certainly Livia was with him as well. As mentioned above, there is also a testament for her presence there from his grandson Drusus. What is more, there is evidence that Sparta and Samos

⁵² Anthony Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (Yale, 2004), 34-35.

⁵³ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 53.30. 1-3.

where given special privileges during this period. Livia must have played a role to the grant of these privileges since these communities enjoyed her favor.⁵⁴ The imperial couple first went to Sicily, where Augustus granted colonial status to Syracuse and also to some other cities. After that, they visited Greece, where Sparta was given the city of Cythera as a gift. It is also highly likely that during this trip Livia visited the well-known sanctuary at Delphi. It is said that she dedicated an inscription of the letter epsilon in gold. After this incident whenever visitors came to Delphi, they were told that this was the Epsilon of Livia.⁵⁵

Then, they proceeded to the island of Samos, which had a special bond with Livia and her family, since they used to be its rulers for a significant amount of time. There, Augustus restored the statues of Athena and Heracles (they were removed from Anthony) to their former positions in the temple of Hera. The next destinations were Asia Minor and Syria.⁵⁶ It is said that while they were in Syria Salome and her brother Herod the Great came to visit them and pay their respects, sealing their friendship.⁵⁷ Subsequently, the couple returned to Samos to spend the winter there, granting its freedom at the same time. They also went to Athens, where they met the poet Vergil.⁵⁸

Based on the modern literature, Livia did travel a lot with her husband for multiple reasons. Death and illness were two reasons why Livia left Rome. The death of her son and her husband's illness, made her go to Ticinum first to escort the body of her son back home and to Taracco, to look after her husband while he was ill. Apart from these serious reasons, there were mainly political ones such as establishing a useful friendship with Salome and Herod, or granting Samos

⁵⁴ Anthony Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (Yale, 2004), 37.

⁵⁵ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 10-12.

⁵⁶ Anthony Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (Yale, 2004), 37-38.

⁵⁷ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 10-12.

⁵⁸ Anthony Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (Yale, 2004), 34-38.

its freedom. To conclude with, Livia visited places such as Delphi, perhaps out of curiosity or because she wanted to see the sacred place.

2) Agrippina the Elder

Agrippina the Elder or Agrippina Major, was a Roman imperial woman, who lived during the first century C.E. She was born in AD 14 in Athens and died in AD 33 in Pandataria. She was Germanicus's wife since AD 4-5 and Augustus's granddaughter.⁵⁹ She, and Germanicus got married after an arrangement conducted by Augustus.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Germanicus and Agrippina were a couple that loved each other a lot. Moreover, Agrippina was a lawful wife and mother according to Tacitus. But, the named couple had completely different characters. Germanicus was a distinguished and popular General of the army and politician. Perhaps he was the most beloved man in the Roman Empire at the time.⁶¹ Also, based on Suetonius's writings in his introduction to the *Life of Caligula*, Germanicus was supposed to be an *exemplum* of courage and beauty. He had both good physical and mental characteristics and he was a charismatic author as well.⁶² Augustus was really fond of him, perhaps that is why he requested from Tiberius (his adoptive son) to make Germanicus his son as well, naming him next in line to the succession and

⁵⁹ Joyce E. Salisbury, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World* (Oxford England, 2001), 3-4.

⁶⁰ Hugh Lindsay, *A Fertile Marriage: Agrippina and the Chronology of Her Children by Germanicus*, Latomus, (1995), 3.

⁶¹ Dio, 57.18.6-8.

⁶² Suetonius, *Life of Caligula*, 3.1.

the grandson of Augustus.⁶³ Agrippina on the other hand, was described by Tacitus as a fierce, arrogant, harsh and power hungry woman. She was proud, and easily lost her temper. In other words, a woman of *tumultuaria incapacita*.⁶⁴ Germanicus and Agrippina had a big family with nine children, but the six actually survived.⁶⁵

Let us try to analyze now, the trips Germanicus and Agrippina had together or separately. In AD 12 Germanicus left for a campaign with Tiberius in Germany. Agrippina was pregnant at the time, so she is said to have spent the summer in Antium, in Augustus' villa. There, she gave birth to her son Gaius.⁶⁶ Later, in the spring of AD 14, Agrippina joined her husband and the vast army to a military campaign in Gaul (France and Belgium), despite the fact that she was pregnant again. After a while, Augustus himself send her son Gaius, to join them. Gaius used to get dressed in a military uniform, so he became the mascot of the camp and he was nicknamed 'Caligula' which meant little boots. Soon afterwards, in August 19, the news of Augustus's death spread out and a mutiny was initiated among the troops. The main request was to let the old soldiers (veterans) to retire.

Agrippina and her son Gaius, joined Germanicus so as to suppress the mutiny. They hoped that if the troops saw the granddaughter of Augustus with her child they would stop the mutiny. But the soldiers unfortunately continued protesting and asking their general Germanicus to overthrow emperor Tiberius and claim the throne for himself. Then, Germanicus threatened to kill himself,

⁶³ Joyce E. Salisbury, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World* (Oxford England, 2001), 3-4. See also: Hugh Lindsay, *A Fertile Marriage: Agrippina and the Chronology of Her Children by Germanicus*, Latomus, (1995), 3.

⁶⁴ Anthony A.Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire* (Yale, 1998), 22-23

⁶⁵ Suetonius, *Life of Caligula*, 7.1.

⁶⁶ Anthony A.Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire* (Yale, 1998), 24.

since he did not want to betray the reigning emperor. The situation was really dangerous and it was decided that Agrippina should leave the camp immediately with her son.⁶⁷

Agrippina did not want to leave her husband. She claimed that since she was a descendant to Augustus, she had no fear and she should be there. But perhaps because of her pregnancy and for the sake of 'Caligula', Germanicus finally persuaded her to leave. The scene of her departing, holding her child and surrounded by other women-wives as well, reminded of an incident that could have taken place during a war, not in times of peace and prosperity. The soldiers felt ashamed when they recalled her imperial origin. Most of them begged her to stay, while others went back to their leader Germanicus. According to Tacitus, Germanicus made a speech addressing the troops about the shame he felt for their deeds and the fact that he could not trust them with the lives of Agrippina and Caligula. He also asked them why they provoked him from committing suicide earlier. The army begged him to forgive them and continued the attacks against the enemy.⁶⁸ Based on Tacitus's writings, it was her own departure, that made the army change its mind about the mutiny and step back. The soldiers perhaps feared of the imperial punishment and did not want Agrippina to leave the camp.

On the other hand, there is Dio Cassius' claim. He gave another perspective of the incident by stating that the soldiers captured Agrippina and her son during the mutiny. But, maybe because she was pregnant, she was set free, (also after Germanicus's demand), but not her son. Caligula was later released, when the mutiny stopped as they had not achieved a thing. It was then, when Germanicus made them fight again against the Germans, so as not to think of protesting again.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.40.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 1.43.

⁶⁹ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 57.5.5-7.

After this event, Germanicus continued fighting the Germans and won many victories. But another misfortune was about to happen. As the troops were returning from the battlefield and were heading to cross the Rhine Bridge, a part of the army got trapped in a swamp and some of them, tried to abandon the rest. Some others tried to destroy the Rhine Bridge, so the Germans would not be able to cross it. They were afraid that the Germans would invade Gaul. It was then, when Agrippina realized that if the bridge fell, then many Roman soldiers would be left behind and perish. So, she went herself to stand on the bridge and refused to leave unless all of them passed on the other side, where they could be safe. What is more, according to C. Plinius (the writer of the Germanic Wars) when she was on the bridge, she expressed her gratitude towards the troops and welcomed them. When everyone passed, she took care of the wounded along with her servants and offered them food and clothes.⁷⁰ Tacitus said she acted as a general, she was in charge until her husband returned to the Rhine. It is also really important to mention that she was pregnant when all these happened.⁷¹

Finally, Tacitus wrote that Agrippina had more influence on the army than other leaders. She was the one who managed to suppress the mutiny and solve the Rhine bridge problem and for that, she was really popular for her bravery. We could also say that she was the one who saved her husband and perhaps she was even the one who did the ‘job’ that needed to be done by the general of the army.⁷²

Germanicus and his wife Agrippina and most of their children travelled in the East as well. Where, based on Tacitus (Tac. Ann. 2.54.1), Germanicus wanted to travel in order to see the world and become acquainted with new things. Then, his desire to learn (*cupido noscendi*) was

⁷⁰ Tacitus, 1.69.2-5.

⁷¹ Ibid, 1.14, 1.44.

⁷² Ibid, 1.69.2-5.

his motive to travel. Firstly, they visited Drusus, Germanicus's stepbrother in Dalmatia and then, they proceeded to Nicopolis, to pay tribute to the remembrance of the great victory of Augustus in the nearby city of Actium.⁷³ After that, they visited Athens, where the people welcomed them with great joy. Euboea was next and then the island of Lesbos, where Agrippina gave birth to a girl named Julia Livilla.⁷⁴ Some time passed by, so as for her to recover from the childbirth, and she followed her husband to Syria. It is said that the Syrian governor Piso and his wife Plancina were not really fond of the couple Germanicus-Agrippina and they insulted them multiple times in various occasions.⁷⁵ There is an incident mentioned by Tacitus, which took place in Petra, a city south of Judaea. Piso and Plancina accompanied Germanicus and Agrippina there, when golden crowns were given to the couple but not to Piso and his wife. The couple (Piso and Plancina) showed their resentment explicitly and refused to accept their gifts.⁷⁶ Following that, Germanicus and Agrippina went to Egypt. Egypt was a Roman province and a really important one, since it was the source of the grain provided to Rome. This is why, according to Augustus no statesman could go there without the emperor's approval. People there suffered from starvation, so Germanicus went there to help without consulting Tiberius first.⁷⁷

For this reason, he also opened the public storehouse to the hungry people of Egypt. The time they spent in Egypt, they tried to explore it by visiting ancient monuments and crossing the Nile. An important element is that Germanicus used to travel a lot as a tourist, so he wore no special clothes and he did not have anyone accompanying him for safety. All these different facts, made

⁷³ Anthony A.Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire* (Yale, 1998), 29.

⁷⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.53.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 2.43, 2.55.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 2.57, see also: Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 49.

⁷⁷ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 52. See also: Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 49.

Tiberius angry and highly critical for their actions in Egypt.⁷⁸ Germanicus went back to Syria to find out that Piso did not obey to his orders. Suddenly, he felt ill and he was sure that Piso and his wife were poisoning him. He made Piso resign his post, but he was already too ill. As he was dying, he requested from his friends to avenge him.⁷⁹ His last words were to the woman he loved, Agrippina, asking her to be patient, to control her temper and submit to those who had the power, by which he meant Tiberius.⁸⁰

The journey back to Rome must also be mentioned. When Germanicus died in AD 19 Agrippina and the whole Empire were shocked and heartbroken. He was so loved that most of the businesses were closed throughout the Empire, as a sign of grief and it is said that even Rome's enemies mourned. There was also a rumor, that it was actually the emperor Tiberius himself and Livia, the ones who persuaded Piso and Plancina to poison Germanicus.⁸¹ Agrippina had to return home with her husband's ashes.⁸² Before the arrival to Rome, she stopped to the island of Corcyra to think and to realize what was happening and prepare herself. It is also said that she made this stop, so everyone would know that she was going to Rome. She was accompanied by her children and a lot of people including veterans from her husband's army, who showed themselves to the harbor in order to see her, and pay homage to the deceased.⁸³

To conclude with the Julio-Claudian imperial women and especially with Agrippina, she accompanied her husband in the majority of his travels in the west as well as in the east. There were multiple reasons for her presence outside Rome. She went to visit provinces for political reasons, she joined the military campaigns where she was really helpful and played perhaps the

⁷⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.59-2.60.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 2.69.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 2.72.1.

⁸¹ Suetonius, *Gaius*, 2, Cassius Dio, 57.18.6.

⁸² Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.75.

⁸³ Ibid, 3.1.

most important role, facing a mutiny and saving the Roman soldiers from the enemies in the Rhine bridge incident. Therefore, she could rightfully claim the title *dux femina*, since she was an upper-class woman who seized power.⁸⁴ She also went for sightseeing with Germanicus in Egypt and gave birth to two of her children outside Rome. She even traveled alone without Germanicus, the first time she gave birth outside Rome and the second time when her husband was dead, when she went to the island of Corcyra to calm herself and think.

Finally, we can trace a major difference between the two imperial women. Agrippina's travels were described thoroughly from Tacitus and Cassius Dio, while Livia's were not. As we said before, they thought that it was usual for an imperial wife to accompany her husband. However, when an imperial woman played a significant role during a trip and had a large political or military impact, then the sources acknowledged this unusual incident by providing us with useful and interesting information.

⁸⁴ Santoro L'Hoir, ' Tacitus and Women's Usurpation of Power' *The Classical World* Vol 88, No 1, 1994, op. cit. (n.13), 5.

Chapter 3

The Nerva-Antonine Dynasty: Plotina and Faustina

To begin with, Nerva was the emperor who instituted the so-called Nerva-Antonine dynasty, the dynasty of the ‘Five Good Emperors’. These Five Good Emperors were: Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, and they ruled from 96 to 180. Scholars gave this name to the dynasty, because Rome had peace and successfulness under the years of their command. In addition, as we also mentioned in the introduction, adoption and not succession was the main way of someone becoming the next emperor during their reign. The reigning emperor used to choose the most worthy man capable of becoming the ruler of the Roman Empire.⁸⁵ This dynasty knew two strong empresses, who will be discussed within this chapter. So, in this chapter we will introduce Pompeia Plotina and Faustina the Younger. We will consider them as examples of why imperial women of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty used to travel. First, we will talk briefly about their lives, characters and the relationship between them and their husbands and secondly, we will focus on their travels and finally the main reasons they left Rome.

1) Pompeia Plotina

Marcus Ulpius Nerva Traianus was a Roman emperor, the second one from the ‘Five Good Emperors’, who belonged to the aforementioned Nerva-Antonine dynasty. He was the one who made the Roman Empire vast as it have never been before. Despite his non noble origin, he succeeded in becoming Emperor as the adopted son of Nerva. Some of his great accomplishments were his building-architectural program, Trajan’s Forum and Market are some

⁸⁵ See: <http://study.com/academy/lesson/the-five-good-emperors-of-rome-the-nervan-antonine-dynasty.html>.

examples. It is also really important to mention his campaigns, he was a well-known military commander and with his military achievements he made the Roman Empire larger than ever before.⁸⁶ Finally, Trajan was seen as the Optimus Princeps in his reign and throughout his life.⁸⁷

Pompeia Plotina was the wife of emperor Trajan. Plotina was most probably from Nemausus in southern Gaul.⁸⁸ She was also called the New Livia, as she was remembered for her decency and simple manners.⁸⁹ Trajan, before becoming an Emperor, was a military commander in Syria first and then, he was sent to Germany, where he married Pompeia Plotina. We cannot really consider it as a journey, nevertheless they were both outside Italy when they got married.⁹⁰

Trajan became an emperor in 98 but he did not leave the northern provinces for a year.⁹¹ He did not travel to the capital perhaps because he wanted to be sure that the defenses in the northern provinces were strong enough to hold any foreign invasion. We can assume that his wife was still with him, even if there is no written evidence about her presence there. Since they got married in Germany, there was no reason for her to leave him, so she should have been there with him that year, until they both travelled to Rome, when he was already the emperor of the Roman Empire. When they reached their destination, Cassius Dio reported that as Plotina was entering the imperial palace for the first time, she looked at the crowd and said: 'I enter here such a woman as I would fain be when I depart'.⁹² With this statement she showed her simplicity even then, when her life has totally changed, as she was now the Emperor's wife and the first lady of the Great Roman Empire. This simplicity was considered as a virtue for a *matrona*. This is why

⁸⁶ See: <http://www.crystalinks.com/trajan.html>.

⁸⁷ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 68.23.1.

⁸⁸ Bennett, Julian, *Trajan: Optimus Princeps* (London, 1997), 24.

⁸⁹ J.P.V.D Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (Michigan, 1962), 133-134.

⁹⁰ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 108.

⁹¹ Pliny The Younger, *Panegyricus*, 12.f.

⁹² Cassius Dio, 68.5.5.

this incident was highly approved and mentioned by the ancient authors. It is true, that both the senator Pliny the younger and Cassius Dio praise her in their writings for the fact that she kept her word that day (the day that she first entered the palace).⁹³ Also, based on a letter from Pliny, Plotina was: ‘the most virtuous woman’, as he said.⁹⁴ Pompeia Plotina acted as the conscious of her husband following Livia’s steps (she did the same thing to her husband Augustus). She had a great influence on him as well, and got herself interfered with serious matters of the state. For example, she told Trajan when to punish people who were unfaithful to him. What is more, since the couple did not have any children of their own, they managed to pass laws, which protected the maltreated sons from their fathers.⁹⁵ In addition, Pliny the younger, through his *Panegyricus*, congratulated the emperor Trajan for his wife, as he thought that she was the perfect candidate for the ‘position’. He also said that Pompeia Plotina was an example of virtuous Roman womanhood in the ancient tradition.⁹⁶

Now, let us return to the travels of the imperial couple. Trajan led the Roman army in two great wars, from AD 101 to 106, which eventually gave Dacia to the Roman Empire. There is no mention of Plotina in these military campaigns so we can only assume that she did not join the army in these times of war with her husband.⁹⁷ However, in 113 there were some serious problems with Parthia, so the emperor went to the east. Plotina did accompany her husband in this journey. They went to Antioch, which is situated in northern Syria and made this city their basic residence.⁹⁸ Cassius Dio described a disastrous earthquake, that happened in Antioch and caused extensive damages to the city and to the people. Trajan himself had to use a window as a

⁹³ Ibid, Pliny, 83.7-8.

⁹⁴ Pliny, *Letters*, 9.28.1.

⁹⁵ A.R Birley, *Lives of the Later Caesars: The First Part of the Augustan History, with Newly Compiled Lives of Nerva and Trajan* (London, 1976), 46.

⁹⁶ Pliny, *Panegyricus*, 83.4-5.

⁹⁷ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 114-115.

⁹⁸ J.P.V.D Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (Michigan, 1962), 134-136.

way out of where he was staying, so as to be safe. Emperor Trajan and Pompeia Plotina must have helped people who suffered during this time from the earthquake.⁹⁹ This action, could definitely show their social concern in difficult situations like this.

As Trajan was staying in Parthia, he was informed that a mutiny had started from the Jews of Cyrene, Cyprus and Alexandria.¹⁰⁰ Most probably because of religious and cultural differences. Trajan tried of course to control this unexpected incident. Again, there is no mention of Plotina being with him assisting his effort on eliminating the mutiny, so we suppose that she must have been in Antioch waiting for his return in 116, when he was ready to progress to Mesopotamia in a year's time.¹⁰¹ The fact that Plotina stayed alone in Antioch, could be a sign of a powerful woman holding the power on behalf of her husband. What is more, if we take for granted that she influenced her husband a lot, we can assume she was authoritative. Furthermore, she was also considered as an *exemplum* of imperial wife, since her influence was positive and even helped Trajan discover the various misconducts of provincial counselors while they were both (Trajan and Plotina) in the east¹⁰². Unfortunately, by the time next year arrived, Trajan was seriously ill and had a stroke, which caused him paralysis. According to Cassius Dio, the emperor thought that he had been poisoned, so he decided to leave Antioch with his wife and return to Rome.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, he was not able to reach his destination (Rome), as his health got worse during the journey. For this reason, they had to stop to the city of Selinus (today's southern Turkey). The emperor finally passed away in this place.¹⁰⁴ After that, his wife Plotina went back to Syria

⁹⁹ Dio, 68.24.1, 68.25.1-6.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 68.32.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 68.33.1.

¹⁰² Mary.T.Boatwright, 'The Imperial Women of the Early Second Century', AJP, Vol 112, No.4, (1991), 529-531.

¹⁰³ Dio, 68.33.2.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

because he had to be cremated.¹⁰⁵ To conclude with, Plotina ‘carried’ his bones to Rome, where they were placed in his Column.¹⁰⁶ This is a clever parallel to Agrippina’s same action, when she carried her husband’s ashes back to Rome, but we will discuss about that in the next chapter.

From the information mentioned above, we can say that even if Pompeia Plotina had a great influence on her husband, acted as his conscious and had indeed played a role in matters of the state, she was more or less behind his shadow, and did not follow him during his important military campaigns or helped him suppress any mutiny¹⁰⁷. Perhaps this is because imperial women of the early second century were not as dynamic and independent as their predecessors¹⁰⁸. However, she was with him during his journey to the East, perhaps because she knew that he was going to stay there for a long time and she wanted to be with him. That, could be the basic and main reason of her movement, her will to be with the man she loved. She also travelled because of his illness, when they had to go back to Rome but actually stopped in Selinus. Finally, she went back to Syria in the event of his cremation, which had to take place soon after his death, and after that, Pompeia Plotina travelled back to Rome.

¹⁰⁵ *Historia Augusta, Hadrian*, 5.9-10.

¹⁰⁶ Dio, 69.2.3.

¹⁰⁷ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 119.

¹⁰⁸ Mary.T.Boatwright, ‘The Imperial Women of the Early Second Century’, *AJP*, Vol 112, No.4, (1991), 513-514.

2) Faustina the Younger

Faustina the Younger was born between 120 and 130. She originated from the Spanish and Narbonensian Roman aristocracy and she was the daughter of Antoninus Pius¹⁰⁹. She was also the wife of the adopted emperor Marcus Aurelius.¹¹⁰ Marcus was adopted by her father Antoninus. Marcus Aurelius was the last of the ‘Five Good Emperors’ and his reign would last nineteen years. Faustina on the other hand, was the first imperial daughter who became an empress right after her mother (they also shared the same name).

Before discussing Faustina’s travels, let us give some information about Marcus Aurelius’s life and reign. He had a good character with various interesting aspects and many assets. That is why the emperor Antoninus used to call him ‘verissimus’ or ‘truest’.¹¹¹ He was a philosopher and his work ‘*Meditations*’ shows who he really was in life. Moreover, the philosophical school that he was intrigued with, was the Stoicism, which was created by Zeno in the city of Athens. The basic thought of this school, is that they believed that each one has the divine element inside his own soul.¹¹² Perhaps this is the reason why Marcus Aurelius used to say: ‘Concerning the Gods, I believe they exist and I honor them because I have experienced their power so many times.’¹¹³ What is more, he also had a co-emperor, Lucius Verus. They were both equals in every way, except from the fact that Marcus alone was the *Pontifex Maximus*.¹¹⁴ It is said that Marcus Aurelius was loved more than any of the other ‘Good Emperors’. It is also worth-mentioning that

¹⁰⁹ Barbara Levick, *Faustina I and II: Imperial Women of the Golden Age* (Oxford, 2014), Introduction.

¹¹⁰ Anthony Birley, *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography* (London, 2000), 34-45, 45.

¹¹¹ *Historia Augusta, Marcus Aurelius*, 1.10.

¹¹² Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 156.

¹¹³ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 12.8.

¹¹⁴ *Historia Augusta, Marcus Aurelius*, 7.5-6.

both emperors Antoninus Pius and his successor Marcus Aurelius respected women and tried to support and strengthen their rights during their reigns.¹¹⁵

Marcus Aurelius and Faustina the Younger got married in the spring of 145 and they had fifteen or sixteen children together. Unfortunately most of them died and only six of them managed to survive to adult life.¹¹⁶ One of the ‘survivors’ was Lucilla, who grew up to marry the co-emperor Lucius Verus and moved to the eastern provinces to live with him.¹¹⁷ The first clue we have about Faustina’s travels dates back in the late 165 when her daughter Lucilla was pregnant and the empress Faustina along with some of her other children went to visit her in Asia Minor.¹¹⁸ This journey actually marked the first time Faustina was not with her husband for a long period of time.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, there have been some problems in the northern provinces, as the Germans crossed the borders once more.¹²⁰ As a result, during the spring of 168, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus had to travel there, to supervise the northern borders and try to make them strong against any enemy attack. It is quite possible that his wife Faustina was there as well, because there is proof of her returning with Marcus Aurelius in Italy in 169.¹²¹ Perhaps we could use another incident confirming her presence to the northern provinces, which is not proved but it is mentioned in the *Historia Augusta*. It is written that Faustina had an affair with Lucius Verus and when he revealed the truth to Lucilla, the empress murdered him by poison during their stay in

¹¹⁵ Virginia M.da Costa, ‘The Consecration Phenomena of Faustina the Elder, *The Celator: Journal of Ancient Art and Artifacts*’ (February, 1994).

¹¹⁶ Kleiner, Diana E. E. and Matheson, Susan B. (eds), *I Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome*, Yale, New Haven, (1996), 44.

¹¹⁷ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 159.

¹¹⁸ Birley, “Marcus Aurelius”, 143.

¹¹⁹ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 159-160.

¹²⁰ *Historia Augusta, Marcus Aurelius* 12.13.

¹²¹ *Ibid, Lucius Verus*, 10.1-2.

the northern provinces, suggesting that Faustina stayed in the north. However, other sources claim that the co-emperor suffered from a stroke and died.¹²²

In 170 there was a great war between the Romans and the barbarians from the north of the Balkans. The Empire suffered many losses but in the end the Romans managed to keep them away from the borders. Nevertheless, Marcus Aurelius had to let some of them to settle in Roman areas.¹²³ There is no mention in the ancient sources that Faustina the Younger accompanied her husband at the beginning of his effort to beat the enemies of the state. On the other hand, we know that during the time when Marcus Aurelius was ‘fighting’ in the northern provinces, he wrote his well-known work ‘*Meditations*’, perhaps because he was alone and had time to think and write.¹²⁴ What we do know is that between 170- 173, when Faustina gave birth to her last child, Vibia Sabina, she then decided that she should escort her husband, and live with him in the northern parts of the Empire. Faustina moved along with some of their children.¹²⁵ Based on Cassius Dio, we know that during the time she spent in the provinces, she was given a special title from her husband: *Mater Castrorum*, meaning Mother of the Camp.¹²⁶ This was actually the strongest proof that she was with him in the north. Also, this honorific title could indicate the great importance of her presence in the military camp or the power she had and influence towards Marcus Aurelius and the Roman army.

In addition, when Marcus Aurelius was at Sirmium, he felt seriously ill and thought he was about to die. This explains the reason why it is said that he thought of killing himself considering his

¹²² Ibid, 9.11, Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 14.8.

¹²³ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 72.10-11.4-5.

¹²⁴ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Loeb ed, xi.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 23, note 6.

¹²⁶ Dio, 72.10.5-7., see also: Birley, Marcus Aurelius, 178.

severe medical situation. His wife must have been with him at the time.¹²⁷ It was then, when news came of an uprising in the eastern provinces initiated by Avidius Cassius, the governor of Syria. He thought and allegedly proclaimed that the emperor was dead and so he claimed the throne for himself.¹²⁸ However, the revolt did not have the expected outcome and Avidius Cassius was murdered by his own soldiers.¹²⁹ Here, another speculation can be traced, which is not totally confirmed, but can also be a proof that Faustina was with her husband when he was ill at Sirmium. Some historians and especially Cassius Dio in his *Roman History*, claimed that Faustina played a major part in this revolt as well. It is said that after seeing her husband's bad health, she was worried about her future and who would be her husband's successor, so she had a contact with Syria's governor, Avidius Cassius asking of his support. The allegations also claim that she wanted to marry him and thus, replace Marcus Aurelius's place on the throne and in her life as well.¹³⁰ Perhaps this why she was given the nickname 'New Messalina'.¹³¹ None of this charges is verified, but it was worth-mentioning for our research.

After the revolt and since his health was improved, the emperor was determined to visit the eastern provinces that had joined the mutiny, perhaps in order to inspect and control them. He took with him his wife and some of his family members including his son and successor Commodus.¹³² By 175 they travelled to Danube, passed the Balkans and reached to the north of Turkey and crossed it.¹³³ By the time they approached the area of Cappadocia, Faustina died.¹³⁴ We do not know the exact reason of why she passed away, but according to Cassius Dio she

¹²⁷ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 164.

¹²⁸ *Historia Augusta, Avidius Cassius*, 6-7, 7.1-3.

¹²⁹ Dio, 72.27.

¹³⁰ Ibid 72.22-23.

¹³¹ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 155.

¹³² *Historia Augusta, Marcus Aurelius*, 25.11-12.

¹³³ Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 191.

¹³⁴ *Historia Augusta, Marcus Aurelius*, 26.4-5.

might have died from gout or she might have killed herself out of shame for her actions during the revolt of Avidius Cassius.¹³⁵ On the other hand, based on *Historia Augusta* she died because of an acute illness.¹³⁶ Furthermore, the place where she died was named Faustinopolis after her and a temple was also build there for her.¹³⁷

Before concluding on the reasons why Faustina travelled, we have to mention how she was depicted after her death. As we also mentioned above, she was called the New Messalina as she was thought to be adulterous, unfaithful to her own husband and she was also blamed for murder and conspiracy from the ancient sources.¹³⁸ Here, we have a parallel to Livia, since Faustina was considered as a powerful wife just like her. Maybe this is the reason why the sources were generally against her, as she acted against the *matrona* symbol by travelling more than the usual and gaining power. On the other hand, according to Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, it is written that he was blessed with a wife so obedient, loving and unaffected.¹³⁹ This is a crucial information concerning her character and how she was based on her own husband's writings. We can accept that this was true, as he had no reason to write something that was not accurate.

Let us now focus on the prime reasons of her travels in the west as well as in the east. First of all, we saw that she travelled to Asia Minor to visit her daughter who was pregnant. It is quite interesting to notice that she did not travel with her husband or with some other guardian, but with some of her children. What is more, we could say that her action showed that family came first for her. She had to see her daughter and help her in this situation, even if she had to cross a big part of the Empire to be with her. We could also add that this was also one of her duties, to

¹³⁵ Dio, 72.29.1.

¹³⁶ *Historia Augusta, Marcus Aurelius*, 26.4-5.

¹³⁷ Birley, Marcus Aurelius, 191.

¹³⁸ *Historia Augusta, Marcus Aurelius*, 26.5.

¹³⁹ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 1.17.7.

help and be with her children. Next, we saw that when she finished bearing children to the Emperor, she decided that she, along with her younger children, should be with him instead of staying in Rome. They had to support him during the difficult duty he had, to protect the Empire from the barbarians. Here, the duty of a wife is combined with the duty of the Empress of the Roman Empire. We should also definitely mention the title: *Mater Castrorum* she was given by her husband during her stay in the north. This title shows how valuable was her presence, how helpful and indispensable she was for him and for the common cause of protecting and securing the borders from the barbarian invasion. It also shows the connection and maybe the influence she had in the military sphere, when she was living in the north in the military camp. We can accept this title, only as something positive for her and for the army in general. Furthermore, we can assume her presence there was meaningful and besides being the Mother of the Roman Empire and of the future heir to the throne, she was also the mother of the army, the mother of the camp.

After that, we can mention illness as a reason of her being with Marcus Aurelius at Sirmium. Again, she had to support and look after him. Finally, she joined him in his journeys to the eastern provinces after the mutiny, perhaps because they wanted to check and strengthen their relations with these rebellious areas.

Chapter 4

Comparison between the Julio-Claudian and the Nerva- Antonine Dynasty

In this chapter we will make an effort on analyzing the differences between the imperial women of the discussed two dynasties. These differences will focus firstly on the reasons why the imperial women travelled, secondly if these women travelled alone or with the company of their husbands or someone else, thirdly we will try to find if these movements had a military or a political impact towards their husbands, the army or the Roman Empire in general. And finally, we will try to see whether their travels were a part of the *matrona* standard, or if these women created a totally different imperial attitude while travelling. We will begin with comparing Livia and Agrippina the Elder, the two chosen women of the Julio-Claudians, then we will proceed with the comparison of Pompeia Plotina and Faustina the Younger of the Antonines, and finally we will make a comparison between the four women of the two different dynasties.

Julio-Claudian Women

Based on what we have already written in the chapter of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, we can trace some differences in certain habits, even in the same dynasty between the two different imperial women. As we have seen, Livia was an empress but Agrippina was not, she was considered an imperial woman though, thanks to her kinship relation to Augustus.¹⁴⁰ This fact however does not seem to be a crucial factor for our research.

¹⁴⁰ Joyce E. Salisbury, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World* (Oxford, England, 2001), 3-4.

Now let us start with the things that were similar for both women. First of all, both Livia and Agrippina travelled in the west as well as in the east. Secondly, they both travelled for sightseeing to see different places and meet the world. For example, Livia visited the sacred place of Delphi¹⁴¹, where she dedicated the letter Epsilon and Agrippina the Elder, went to Egypt with her husband Germanicus, where they explored the place and crossed the Nile River.¹⁴² To continue with the similarities, both Livia and Agrippina traveled for political reasons. In the case of Livia, she accompanied Augustus in the east, to Greece, where they have given Sparta and Samos some special privileges.¹⁴³ They also went to Sicily and granted colonial status to Syracuse. Moreover, Livia played an important role in the establishment of their friendship with Salome and her brother Herod the Great, when she travelled to Asia Minor with Augustus.¹⁴⁴ In the second case of Agrippina the Elder, she accompanied her husband in many provinces such as Nicopolis to pay respect for Augustus's great victory in Actium.¹⁴⁵ Also, they stopped in Athens, Euboia and Syria to inspect the areas. We can mention their travel to Egypt again, but this time their motivation to go, can be considered as social, as they wanted to help the people who were starving.¹⁴⁶ Both women travelled because of death. According to Seneca, Livia did so for Drusus' death, when she went to Ticinum to take his body and escort it back to Rome. Finally, we can acknowledge Agrippina's travel to Corcyra, when her husband was dead, as a political one, based on the allegation that she went there to spend some time so as everyone would know

¹⁴¹ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 10-12.

¹⁴² Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 52. See also: Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 49.

¹⁴³ Anthony Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (Yale, 2004), 34-38.

¹⁴⁴ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 10-12.

¹⁴⁵ Anthony A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire* (Yale, 1998), 29.

¹⁴⁶ Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 52. See also: Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 49.

what happened and that her final destination was Rome.¹⁴⁷ She also went to the island of Corcyra, to prepare herself for the upcoming events in Rome.¹⁴⁸

The number of differences concerning the reasons of travelling of these two Julio-Claudian women are more than the similarities. To start with, the amount of journeys is different. Livia did accompany Augustus, but not so frequently as Agrippina the Elder. Then, we have the matter of illness that made Livia travel when Augustus was ill in Spain¹⁴⁹, but Agrippina did not travel for that reason. Maybe because she was with Germanicus in most of his journeys abroad. To continue with, perhaps the most important difference is that Agrippina travelled for military purposes when she accompanied Germanicus and the Roman army to the northern provinces, whereas we do not know if Livia did such a thing. What is more, Agrippina gave birth to two of her children outside Rome during her travels, while Livia did not. One more major difference, is that Agrippina also travelled alone, to give birth to one of her children or with the company of her kids, when they went to Corcyra. Yet, we do not have any proof that Livia made any travel without her husband.

To conclude with, we have to mention the impact their journeys had on their husbands and the Roman Empire in general. It is true that Livia had a major influence on her husband.¹⁵⁰ And as we written before, perhaps that was the prime reason why she wanted to travel with him. Now, the influence she had towards Augustus or the Roman Empire, is not quite clear but we can suppose, based on Seneca's writings that she had a political impact during her visit in Gaul, when she argued with Augustus about the grant of citizenship to a Gaul. In addition, she must have played a positive political role as well, to the grant of privileges to the cities of Samos and

¹⁴⁷ Tacitus, 3.1.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 10-12.

¹⁵⁰ Anthony Barrett, *Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome* (Yale, 2004), 19-27.

Sparta.¹⁵¹ Since she favored these provinces, she must have influenced Augustus and even persuaded him to give privileges to these regions. As a matter of fact, she played a political role during her trips and influenced her husband's decisions and as a result, the lives of a lot of people who lived in the provinces. Agrippina's travels on the other hand, are considered to have had major military impact. When she first joined her husband in a military campaign after giving birth to her son Gaius, she played the most important role to the mutiny that followed. That is because according to Tacitus, she was the one who made the soldiers feel ashamed of their deeds and stop protesting. This is crucial, because she performed her husband's duty in his stead, so we could say that she saved him from the consequences that would follow if he would not have controlled the situation. We could also translate her actions as a woman's who was entering a man's world, in other words she was a 'mannish' woman¹⁵². Her deeds were also good for her husband's reputation. She therefore influenced him positively and the Empire in general, since the mutiny stopped and they continue fighting the Germans.¹⁵³ In addition, Agrippina had a major part to play to the Rhine Bridge incident, where she decided to stand on the Bridge and wait for all the soldiers to cross it. She saved them from the German invaders and then provided them with food, clothes and helped the wounded.¹⁵⁴ She showed her bravery, while her contribution to the Roman army and to the state, was decisive.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 34-38.

¹⁵² David Shotter, 'Review: Agrippina: Mother of Nero by A.A Barrett' (Cambridge, 1998), 117.

¹⁵³ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 57.5.5-7.

¹⁵⁴ Tacitus, 1.69.2-5.

Nerva-Antonine Women

From our analysis about the travels of the imperial women of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty, we see that there are more differences concerning the travels of these two women than similarities.

But, let us begin with the things that were more or less the same. Both Pompeia Plotina and Faustina the Younger joined their husbands to the eastern provinces but for different reasons. On the one hand, Plotina went with Trajan in Antioch¹⁵⁵ and decided to use it as their basic residence, perhaps because she knew the amount of time that he would spend there, so she wanted to be with her husband. Here, we can suggest that this trip was already well-planned and Plotina's presence was wanted and needed. On the other hand, Faustina joined Marcus Aurelius in the eastern provinces because of the sudden mutiny, which took place there.¹⁵⁶ Faustina and her husband therefore, visited the eastern provinces for political reasons, to strengthen their relationship with them. Moreover, if the accusation that Faustina played role in this mutiny was true,¹⁵⁷ then she might have accompanied her husband to show her remorse about this incident. Which can be seen as fact with big difference from Plotina. There is also one similarity between the two women of this dynasty. They both travelled because of the sudden illness of their husbands. Plotina stopped in the city of Selinus, when she and her husband were heading to Rome, because of the deterioration of his health condition.¹⁵⁸ Whereas, Faustina is said to have been with her husband, Marcus Aurelius at Sirmium, when he was also ill.¹⁵⁹

Now, their differences will be analyzed thoroughly. First of all, Pompeia Plotina even though she got interfered in the matters of the Roman Empire and despite the fact that she had a great

¹⁵⁵ Anthony Birley, *Lives of the Later Caesars* (1976), Hadrian, p.65.

¹⁵⁶ *Historia Augusta, Marcus Aurelius*, 25.11-12.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 24.5-6, *Avidius Cassius*, 7.1, 9.9.

¹⁵⁸ Cassius Dio, 68.33.2.

¹⁵⁹ Jasper Burns, *Great Women of Imperial Rome, Mothers and Wives of the Caesars* (New York, 2007), 164.

influence towards her husband, she did not follow him in the majority of his trips. On the other side, Faustina spent only a little time apart from Marcus Aurelius.¹⁶⁰ Secondly, Faustina the Younger travelled to Asia Minor to see her daughter, who was pregnant.¹⁶¹ The interesting part of this fact is that she did not travel along with Marcus Aurelius, but with some of her children to visit her daughter. This is something that Pompeia Plotina never did. Whenever she travelled she was always with the company of Trajan. Thirdly, Faustina the Younger decided when she finished with the childbirths to join with her children Marcus Aurelius wherever he were, even during military campaigns and in the battlefields, so as to be with him.¹⁶² Pompeia Plotina never joined Trajan in military campaigns. Thirdly, Pompeia Plotina travelled because of death. When Trajan died, she had to go to Syria to cremate him.¹⁶³ Faustina the Younger on the other hand, did not have the opportunity to travel for this reason, as she was the one who died before Marcus Aurelius in Cappadokia.¹⁶⁴

But what about the influence these journeys had towards other parties (husbands, army, Roman Empire)? Having researched and analyzed Pompeia's travels, we cannot really find any strong influence she had through her journeys. Perhaps it is safe to mention the time she spent in Antioch, when the devastating earthquake happened, and she is said to have helped the people in need along with her husband Trajan.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, her influence was clearly positive in this hard incident. On the other hand, we could say that the time she spent in Antioch, in the absence of Trajan (when he went to military missions), she was there alone, perhaps as the representative of her husband in the East. However, Faustina the Younger's trips had a large and quite clear

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 159-160.

¹⁶¹ Birley, Marcus Aurelius, 143.

¹⁶² Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 23 note 6.

¹⁶³ *Historia Augusta, Hadrian*, 5.9-10.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, *Marcus Aurelius*, 26.4-5.

¹⁶⁵ Dio, 68.24.1, 68.25.1-6.

impact especially towards the Roman army. When she was with her children in the military camp escorting Marcus Aurelius, Cassius Dio reported that she was given the honorific title: Mother of the Camp. Reading this, we can assume that her influence had both political and military effect. Also, this title could indicate her status as *dux femina* (as we also said before for Agrippina Maior)¹⁶⁶. Finally, we could even say that she had a positive impact on her husband's health, when she travelled with him at Sirmium, to help him overcome his illness.

Julio-Claudian Dynasty Compared to Nerva-Antonine Dynasty

To continue, we will discuss in detail the major differences and similarities between the two different dynasties. We will also make an effort to answer some basic questions. If we consider these four women as examples of what imperial women used to do more or less in the first-second century, which are the dominant reasons of their departure from Rome, did all these four women of our two dynasties act in the same way or there were also differences? Did they travel alone or with the company of their husbands? Did they influence their husbands or the Roman Empire in general, during their travels? Finally, did they all act according to the *matrona* stereotype or not?

To begin with, we have to compare their travels based on the geographical perspective. Both Livia and Agrippina from the Julio-Claudian dynasty travelled in the West as well as in the East, while Pompeia Plotina, from the second dynasty that we are discussing, did not travel to the West. Perhaps this is the case, because all the others went to the West mostly to join their husbands on military campaigns. That is something that Pompeia Plotina never did, as we already mentioned above.

¹⁶⁶ Lien Foubert, 'The Impact of Women's Travels On Military Imagery In The Julio-Claudian Period' (Nijmegen, 2009), 354.

To continue with the reasons why these women from the two different dynasties travelled, we can state that all of them moved for political reasons. But we cannot say the same for the purpose of sightseeing, as only the imperial women from the Julio-Claudian dynasty travelled for this reason, but not Pompeia Plotina and Faustina the Younger. What is more, all of them travelled because of the death of a beloved person except for Faustina the Younger.

On the other hand, both women from the Nerva-Antonine dynasty travelled because of the illness of a family person, but from the Julio-Claudians, only Livia travelled because of Augustus' illness. Agrippina in fact, was almost all the time near Germanicus, so she would have been there in an unexpected illness as well. Of course we do not know anything specific about that, but we can state that most likely imperial women always travelled because of illness, maybe it was one of their duties. Subsequently, from the Julio-Claudians, Agrippina was the one who travelled for military reasons and joined the campaigns, and from the Nerva-Antonine dynasty, Faustina the Younger was the one who joined the Roman army and took the name: "Mother of the Camp", also mentioned before.

It is also really important to state, that some of these women travelled without the company of their husbands but with other family members and some of them even gave birth to their children somewhere except Rome. To be more specific, Agrippina made a journey without Germanicus and gave birth to a child outside Rome and Faustina the Younger, also travelled without the company of Marcus Aurelius. As for their influence towards their husbands and the Roman Empire, we can say that the more they travelled, the more influence they had, especially those who joined military campaigns.

Furthermore, we were able to see by analyzing their travels, that women from the same dynasty could travel more or less according to the situation, or their wishes and if we compare these four

women again, Agrippina and Faustina were the ones who travelled more and had larger influence on their husbands and the Roman Empire, while Livia and Pompeia Plotina acted more according to the *matrona* stereotype and were more restricted. Nevertheless, we saw that by examining these women, there were many differences to their behavior and action, but they all tried to perform their duties and support their husbands and the Roman Empire.

Here, we must also make a comparison between the *matrona* symbol and the actual attitude these four imperial women had. Before we try to answer this question let us say again that a *matrona* was a wife restricted in the private area of her house, always willing to support her husband in any matter in the private and in the public domain. A *matrona* was supposed to have specific virtues and she was also the one who kept the idea of family and home together. To begin with, Livia and Pompeia Plotina did not travel much as we said before, and this was considered as something customary for an imperial wife and according to their *matrona* identity. However, Agrippina and Faustina did not feel restricted by this stereotype and travelled more than the usual. What is more, the fact that they were protagonists in mutinies and played significant roles inside the military camps, showed that they exceeded the rules of their time.

We could also say that they acted against this stereotype, since they were not just humble imperial wives joining their husbands, or executing part of their duties. Instead, they took over power and even performed men's duties during their trips. This is also the definition of a *dux femina*. Therefore, this title could easily match to Agrippina's or Faustina's case. However, as we saw in the Introduction, Agrippina could be identified as a *dux femina* with the positive meaning of this stereotype, while Faustina represented the negative meaning of the *dux femina*, since she was accused by the ancient sources for conspiracy against Marcus Aurelius in order to remain powerful and have a crucial position in the hierarchy of the Roman empire. This action

could not be but an exception to the female ideals of the time. Sometimes also, the two aforementioned imperial women travelled alone, without the male company and Agrippina gave birth to a child outside Rome. All these activities were performed in complete contrast to the *matrona* ideal, as they should always have a male guardian with them and more importantly, give birth at the safety of their private sphere.

So, on the one hand the travels of Livia and Pompeia participated in the well-known to us female ideals, as they were not many and their purpose was either political or just for company and duty. On the other hand, we have Agrippina's and Faustina's cases, which did not follow the existing female ideals. These women's travels even created a quite different imperial attitude and made clear that the imperial women could have more freedom than it was expected during the first and second century AD. Furthermore, they could exercise power, influence their own husbands and change the course of events even away from the Roman capital.

Finally, how did the ancient writers see this new attitude? First of all, based on what we have analyzed so far, we can assume that both the ancient and the modern writers thought that it was customary for women to accompany their husbands abroad. So, we can consider this movement as part of the *matrona* standard. To continue, as we have seen before, the ancient sources did not really mention Livia's or Pompeia's travels, while we were able to find quite a lot of scattered information about Agrippina's and Faustina's trips. Perhaps, since the first two imperial women acted as *matronas*, the ancient sources did not think that it was interesting to write about their customary travels. But, they wrote quite a lot on Agrippina and Faustina, as their action was something unknown to them and maybe this is why Faustina especially, was treated with hostility and suspicion. However, we cannot say the same for Agrippina's case, since her role at the Rhine Bridge was quite significant and had positive effect on the Roman empire. Therefore,

even the ancient writers through the sources we used, made clear that some imperial women acted against the 'natural' order of their time. This is why, they tried to analyze their activities by providing us with various theories and speculations.

To sum up, we cannot safely decide if they were against this travel attitude or not. But, we can conclude that most of the ancient sources did not find that it was an appropriate behavior for an imperial woman. Nevertheless, they could not help but praise them for their accomplishments.

Conclusion

Without any doubt, Roman people used to travel for multiple reasons. Work and leisure were the two basic reasons why they left Rome. More specifically, mostly men travelled, since most of the times we do not have clear mention of women travelling abroad. However, imperial women had the opportunity to make journeys in the west and in the east of the Roman Empire, considering the fact that their special status allowed them to appear and participate in the public, as well as in the private sphere.

The first outcome of our thesis, is that each of the four imperial women chosen in this research, had her own agenda, concerning the reasons and aims of travelling, and she acted based on this plan. Some imperial women travelled a lot, accompanying their husbands or sometimes without them and created a new imperial attitude, while others remained more restricted in some places following the *matrona* status.

The reasons of travelling were various, with the military and political ones identified as the most popular reasons to travel. Especially, Agrippina from the Julio-Claudian dynasty and Faustina from the Nerva-Antonine, were the ones who travelled for these reasons, and played a crucial role accordingly, during these trips. Furthermore, health was another reason why our four chosen imperial women decided to travel as well. These journeys were always in function of a beloved one. Leisure along with sightseeing was a reason in minor occasions, and as we saw and analyzed, when these trips were made, the imperial women went to the east.

It was also really interesting and even intriguing to find out that some of our imperial women were pregnant when they started their journeys and even gave birth to other places than home, which was really dangerous at the time. In addition, one hint of the travels became a symbolic

ritual over time: it was the transportation of their husband's or other family member's ashes back to home. More specifically, it was Agrippina and later followed by Pompeia Plotina, the women who travelled in order to perform this ritual.

To conclude with our findings, the travels of imperial women are not remarkably criticized by ancient writers. This could indicate an existing tendency of leaving their homes to visit other places, as mostly acceptable from the Roman people of the time, and of course as a part of their duties. Therefore, travelling started indeed to be a part of the expected female behavior for an empress or an imperial woman. However, we also analyzed a new imperial attitude created by some imperial women (who did not follow strictly the *matrona* stereotype), according to which they were quite powerful and influential during their multiple trips.

Of course, further studies need to be carried out in order to validate the reasons of travelling of imperial women, by examining more cases. It would be interesting to assess imperial women from other dynasties as well, or even try to examine whether women of lower status were able to travel in Roman times.

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