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CORBULO'S DAUGHTER*

By BARBARA LEVICK

My name is Domitia Augusta, wife of the Emperor Domitian. That was the title I enjoyed forty years ago, as coins show,[1] and I am still referred to as Domitian's wife on the products of my brick works.[2] Does that surprise you? It is the way widows are customarily referred to.[3] As to the title Augusta, the rustics here at Gabii tell me that the title will appear on the monument they plan to set up for me and my family after my death.[4] By then it will be uncontroversial. Other women have accepted the title since me – after due hesitation, to show their proper modesty – and of course I have never *demanded* its use; that would be setting myself up in rivalry with the womenfolk of Trajan and Hadrian, Plotina, the Matidias, and Sabina.

I am not the only Augusta to tell her story. Agrippina did the same.[5] Like her I have been the subject of tittle-tattle on the part of people who had their own axes to grind. What they said will turn me into a harridan, and unfaithful with it. I would say that they are turning me into another Poppaea, but it is worse than that.[6] Of course, there will be rival

* The generous hospitality of the Maison Suger and of the Bibliothèque of the Ecole Normale Supérieure made it possible in July 2000 for me to do the work on the study that has given rise to this paper. The opportunity of delivering it at the Triennial Meeting of the Greek and Roman Societies in July 2001, along with Rhiannon Ash, to whose paper on Corbulo it was a pendant, and contributions from our audience, have improved it greatly.

[1] Domitia's title: *RIC* 2. 179f., nos. 210–15B; 209, nos. 440–3. R. Syme, 'Princesses and others in Tacitus', *G&R* NS 28 (1981), 49ff., (= *Roman Papers* 3 (Oxford, 1984), 1374ff.) on *CIL* 15. 552 (Severus and Arrian as consuls) allows Domitia to survive until c. 129; the monument (n. 4 below) is dated 23 Apr. 140.

[2] Bricks with 'ex fig. Dom. Domitiani': *CIL* 15. 548–58; (before 96) servants use 'Augusta': *CIL* 9. 3418f.; 3432; 3438; 3469 has 'wife of Domitian'.

[3] Widows: S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage:* Iusti coniuges *from the time of Cicero to the time of Ulpian* (Oxford, 1991), 498.

[4] Gabii monument: *ILS* 272. W. C. McDermott and A. E. Orentzel, *Roman Portraits: the Flavian and Trajanic Period* (Columbia, Missouri, London, 1979), 83 note that in Juvenal 3. 192; 6. 56; 7. 4; 10. 100f., Gabii is synonymous with simple country life.

[5] Agrippina's memoirs: Tac. *Ann.* 4. 53. 2; Pliny, *N.H.* Index 7; 7. 46.

[6] Reputation: summarized by C. L. Murison, *Rebellion and Reconstruction Galba to Domitian: Books 64–67 (A.D. 68–95) Amer. Phil. Assoc. Monogr. Ser.* 37. *An Historical Commentary on Cassius Dio's* Roman History 9 (Atlanta, 1999), 213ff.; S. Gsell, *Essai sur le règne de l'Empereur Domitien* (Paris, 1894), 239; K. H. Waters, 'The Character of Domitian', *Phoenix* 18 (1964), 59f.; cf. McDermott and Orentzel (n. 4), 69–86; 'arrogant and cynical' : Syme 1981 (n. 1), 50f.: Domitian 'a remarkably long-suffering husband'; J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Roman Women, their History and Habits*

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versions. I can already see simpletons recreating me as a loving and blameless wife who asked the senate for permission to gather together her husband's dismembered body and commemorated his assassination with a statue.[7]

It is certainly time my own story was heard; it is as much 'the truth' as anyone's, and it is full of paradox and irony. But first you need to understand how well connected I was. I was born at the end of Claudius' reign, the daughter of a general. I can't claim that his family was of the highest social distinction, but he had property, connexions, a fine presence, and a strong mind.[8] Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo had already distinguished himself in Germany, attacking the tribes as every decent general should, but Claudius was afraid of him and made him pull back.[9] The Emperor's behaviour was noticed and disliked; when it came to choosing the man who would recover Armenia for Rome at the beginning of Nero's reign the advisory council promptly chose Corbulo.[10] Of course my father was the man for the job, but it made the right political impression too. He already stood for something, and was magnificently suited to representing a cause.

My mother's family was older and more significant. She was Cassia Longina,[11] daughter of the legal expert who was consul in the latter years of Tiberius, and who married a descendant of Augustus, and niece of Lucius, the husband of Gaius Caligula's sister Drusilla.[12] They came from the family of the Liberator, assassin of Julius Caesar, and the Cassii

(London, 1962), 131: Pliny, *Pan.* 83. 4, seems at first sight to offer support: 'Multis illustribus dedecori fuit aut inconsultius uxor adsumpta aut retenta patientius: ita fori claros domestica destruebat infamia' ('It has been a black mark against many distinguished men that they took a wife without sufficient thought, or put up with her too long: so ill repute on the domestic front spelt ruin to men brilliant in public life'). But Pliny is not making a contrast between one princeps and another, but between Trajan and others who are *illustres* and *clari*; Domitian was not that.

[7] Domitia idealized: Procop. *Secret History* 8. 212–22.

[8] Corbulo: R. Syme, 'Domitius Corbulo', *JRS* 60 (1970), 27ff. (= *Roman Papers* 2 (Oxford, 1979), 806ff.); τῷ γένει λαμπρός, Dio 62. 19. 2.

[9] German campaign: Tac. *Ann.* 11. 18.1–20. 3.

[10] Parthian commission: Tac. *Ann.* 13. 8. 2.

[11] Domitia is Longina in Suet. *Dom.* 3. 1 and may be the Longina of *ILS* 9518 (Peltuinum), unless that is Corbulo's wife. Syme suggested, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), 2, 788; (n. 8: 1970), 34–9 (= (1979), 805ff.), that that woman was a Cassia; she may appear in the fragmentary *CIL* 9. 3426: *PIR*^{2} C 333; M. – Th. Raepsaet-Charlier, *Prosopographie des femmes de l'Ordre sénatorial (Ier et IIme siècles)*. Acad. roy. de Belgique 4 (2 vols., Louvain, 1987), 1, 186 no. 196. L. Cassius Longinus: *PIR*^{2} C 503.

[12] Cassius: *PIR*^{2} C 501. Wife Junia Lepida: *PIR*^{2} I 861; Syme (no. 8: 1970), 37 (cf. Syme (n. 11), 560 and 788) notes that Junia's brother was born only in 25. Domitia's political advantages: B. W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian* (London, N.Y., 1992), 34; ties with Corbulo's men: Syme (n. 11), 788–90; J. Nicols, *Vespasian and the Partes Flavianae. Hist. Einzelschr.* 28 (Wiesbaden, 1978), 118–24, admits that the evidence for the group is 'ambiguous'.

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Longini had a censor in the family more than a hundred years before Caesar's death; they had been active on the side of popular reform and strict standards of senatorial behaviour,[13] and my grandfather was exiled in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy against Nero.

My father's military reputation was enhanced in the long war against Parthia, in charge successively of the great provinces of Cappadocia-Galatia and Syria and their legions. He wrote memoirs too, and it would be better to read his own account of his achievements than Tacitus' slightly sour, truncated version.[14] But Corbulo's success made him a potential rival to the flabby Nero, who had never seen an army, and he also gave my elder sister to Annius Vinicianus,[15] whose family had long been suspect to the Julio-Claudians, with several killed under Claudius. My father was forced to suicide two years before Nero's fall for involvement in the conspiracy that Vinicianus hatched at Beneventum. That was not before I too had been married to a member of one of the most distinguished families, also with some fine military achievements, the Plautii: L. Aelius Lamia Plautius Aelianus was son of a great governor of Moesia.[16] The Plautii came through the Year of the Four Emperors, and had to be placated by Vespasian, but the Flavians were not going to allow such a family too close to power.

The Flavians' own political activities were a discreditable counterpoint to those of Corbulo. Titus had divorced his wife Marcia, niece of Barea Soranus, just before he died like Corbulo for involvement with the conspiracies of Gaius Piso and Vinicianus; then again Vespasian had in a sense taken over the position of supreme Roman commander in the east that Corbulo had occupied for so long. His opponents were only rebels in a third-rate province, Judaea, but they were tough and obstinate. My father might have had that war if he had not been removed, and history would have been very different.

It was probably my parentage and my marriage to Aelius that attracted Domitian's attention. My name gave me the respect of friends

[13] Cassii Longini: T. R. S. Broughton, *Magistrates of the Roman Republic* (N.Y., 1951), 1, 449; 485; 536.

[14] Memoirs: Tac. *Ann.* 15. 16. 1f.; Pliny, *N.H.* 2. 180; 5. 83; 6. 23.

[15] *PIR*^{2} A 200; 'Beneventum conspiracy': Suet. *Nero* 36. 1; E. M. Smallwood, *Docs. illustrating the Principates of Gaius Claudius and Nero* (Cambridge, 1967), 25 no. 25. Two grandsons of Vistilia were punished: Glitius Gallus, exiled 65 (Tac. *Ann.* 15. 71. 3); Ser. Cornelius Orfitus, victim to Aquillius Regulus 66–7 (below, n. 62). The entire network: B. W. Jones, 'Domitian's Attitude to the Senate', *AJP* 94 (1973), 86f.

[16] Aelianus: *PIR*^{2} A 205. See Raepsaet-Charlier (n. 11), 287f., no. 327: 'beaupère': Ti. Plautius Silvanus Aelianus (*PIR*^{2} P 480) in Moesia: M. McCrum and A. G. Woodhead, *Select Docs. of the Principates of the Flavian Emperors* (Cambridge, 1961), 261. A. Plautius had led the invasion of Britain and M. Plautius Silvanus had distinguished himself in the Balkans (*EJ* 200).

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and officers of my father, as well as friends and pupils of Cassius Longinus, who had only my mother as his surviving child. On me focused affection and respect from the survivors of the conspiracies, who were returning to Rome after the overthrow of Nero, and from the legates and junior officers who had served under Corbulo, except those who passed from his army to that of Vespasian and so did well. (And I do have to admit that he was a disciplinarian who might alienate junior officers as well as men.[17])

Domitian was intoxicated with his new position as the emperor's son and representative in Rome, with consular power. But after his expedition to Gaul in the spring and summer of the first year of Vespasian's reign, which might have given him military glory, he knew that it was not going to be allowed. There is no need to believe the story of his intrigue with Cerialis, the general on the Rhine, for one to see that this was a turning point.[18] Back at Rome he had the pick of Rome's unmarried girls – but he chose me.[19] Even reflected military glory was useful after that abortive expedition. Besides, he had another reason: my connexion with the members of the Pisonian and Beneventum conspiracies: it helped him take up a conciliatory attitude while Vespasian and Titus had to face senatorial reactions to their high-handed behaviour and especially their dynastic succession plans.[20]

For me too of course he was a good match: Titus had only daughters,[21] and on his death Domitian stood to become Princeps. There was no real opposition from Vespasian and Titus. They were glad of the links that our marriage created.[22] I might add a legal point, so you

[17] Martinet: Tac. *Ann.* 11. 19, with Nicols (n. 12), 123f. Legacy: Syme (n. 11), 593; 789; Nicols (n. 12), 118–24, with the group losing influence as L. Funisulanus Vettonianus (suff. 78) advanced. A Celsus, perhaps A. Marius Celsus, *PIR*^{2} M 296, who probably died as governor of Syria under Vespasian, formerly a subordinate of Corbulo's, may have written up his Parthian war: Lyd. *Mag.* 3. 33, with Syme (n. 11), 683.

[18] Turning point of 70: Tac. *Hist.* 4. 85f.

[19] Married: Suet. *Dom.* 1. 3: 'uxorem', 'nupta'; Dio 66. 3. 4: *ἀνδρός*. Tac. *Hist.* 1. 1, has Domitian retiring to debauchery, and Dio 66. 3. 4, cf. 9. 4, puts his sexual conquests in his Alban villa. Murison (n. 6), 132 asks how he possessed this place at so early an age; the scene may be later embroidery: see R. Darwall-Smith, 'Albanum and the Villas of Domitian', *Pallas* 40 (1994), 148. Murison (loc. cit.) thinks the marriage took place before Domitian's departure for Gaul; it might still be seen as a means of obtaining reflected glory.

[20] Domitian's conciliatory attitude: Jones (n. 15), 86.

[21] Titus' (plural) daughters: Phil. *Vit. Ap.* 7. 7.

[22] Vespasian and the marriage: Nicols (n. 12), 119f. (Vespasian thought that Titus would be succeeded by Domitian's sons; that is too definite), and J. P. Wilson, 'The Entitlement of Vespasian', *Journ. Indo-Europ. Stud.* 15 (1987), 221f. Jones (n. 15) 86, argues that 70 was not the ideal time for Vespasian's son to marry into a family with Pisonian connexions; in Jones (n. 12), 18, he calls Domitian's marriage 'wise'.

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can see what a headstrong and ingenious person Domitian was. He was *in patria potestate*,[23] had not a penny of his own and was bound to do what he was told. All the same, he had the strongest bargaining counters: my seduction, if made public, bound Aelius to prosecute, and made both Domitian and me liable to exile. The only respectable way out was a quick divorce and remarriage. In other words, Domitian forced his own choice of a bride on his family through the threat of scandal, and Aelius and his father had to give way before the ruling dynasty. I am one of many wives surrendered for political gain: Livia to Octavian, Lollia to Gaius, Poppaea to Nero. Hence in part the high honours accorded to Aelius' father.[24] He was sent to govern Tarraconensis – and recalled from the journey to the honourable but ineffective post of Prefect of the City and a second consulship. The story that Titus sympathetically advised Aelius to remarry, only to be asked if he too was after a wife, was only an invention of our detractors.[25]

As time went on, Domitian had little to show but a series of suffect consulships; he became more and more disgruntled, and so did I. The move that Vespasian and Titus proposed was to bind him more closely to them by getting him to divorce me and take Titus' unmarried daughter, his own niece, just as Tiberius had married Augustus' daughter Julia. That was no help. He was already Leader of the Youth, a title that Titus had soon been able to forget,[26] and marriage to the Emperor's daughter would keep him in that younger generation when he was Titus' brother and should have been his partner in power. He refused Julia and stayed with me.[27]

As Emperor, Titus showed no sign of making concessions, allowing Domitian only a regular consulship. And a new threat to our position

[23] *Patria potestas*: pointed out by Murison (n. 6), 132, who cites *Inst. Iust.* 1. 10 *pr.*

[24] Silvanus: M. P. Vinson, 'Domitia Longina, Iulia Titi, and the literary tradition', *Hist.* 38 (1989), 438, stressing the political motives behind Domitian's marriage, holds that he belonged to the 'Vitellian group'. He was in Rome on 21 June, during Domitian's absence (Tac. *Hist.* 4. 53); recall McCrum and Woodhead (n. 16), 261: 'Hunc legatum in {in} Hispaniam ad praefectur(am) urbis remissum senatus . . . honoravit' ('This man the senate honoured when he had been sent as legate to Spain and returned to be Prefect of the City'); suff. II 74.

[25] Aelius' remarriage: Suet. *Dom.* 10. 2. He became great-grandfather of the Emperor L. Verus: *PIR*^{2} P 494 and p. 196.

[26] Youth Leader: McCrum and Woodhead (n. 16), 117 (80); *RIC* 2, 121f. nos. 39–51.

[27] Offer of Julia: Jones (n. 12), 33, opts for soon after Vespasian's return (late-summer – early autumn 70; she was born on August 10, during the early sixties). B. W. Jones, *The Emperor Titus* (London, N.Y., 1984), 117f., n. 23; M. P. O. Morford, 'Three Roman Emperors', *Phoenix* 22 (1968), 71, takes the refusal as part of the feud with Titus; *contra* K. H. Waters, 'The second Dynasty of Rome', *Phoenix* 17 (1963), 216 ('propriety'). McDermott and Orentzel (n. 4), 74, think Titus tried to force Domitian to divorce his wife; Syme (n. 1), 50f., attributes the initiative to Vespasian.

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was emerging: Domitian's cousin Flavius Sabinus, grandson of Vespasian's elder brother, who had died for the cause in 69 and might have made a better Emperor than Vespasian. Now when Domitian refused Julia she was married to young Sabinus. What would have been downgrading in Domitian's eyes was a leg up for him. Now it looked as if Titus might even be thinking of constructing a partnership between Domitian and this man. Outrageous! – but in spite of his displays of good nature, he had clearly never trusted Domitian: otherwise he would have helped him to higher office.

What made it worse was that, although Sabinus and Julia had no children as yet, my son by Domitian, who had been born in the year of his second consulship, three years after our marriage, had died,[28] and there were no signs of our having another. An heir to the Principate who himself had children was a particular asset: he saved worrying about matters far into the future. That was one of the assets that Germanicus Caesar had over his adoptive brother Drusus.

These plans had not gone far when Titus died, and my husband lost no time in asserting his position. As son and brother of Emperors he had claims that could not be questioned. Sabinus might have Julia as his wife, but he was yet to be consul. So I came to have my place on the coinage, on reverses as Domitian's consort, and on obverses as well.[29]

After the initial euphoria Domitian turned to making his position strong enough for him to impress his own personality on government. First he had to ingratiate himself with all classes at Rome, giving enough to Sabinus to keep him happy – the *ordinarius* consulship would do – and then get rid of him. Just think! The man was already dressing his slaves in the imperial white livery.[30] Then Domitian still lacked military prestige. For the moment the later victories of Agricola (what a relief to have that dreary prig out of the court!) would have to do until Domitian's own successes eclipsed the advance in Britain.

My husband managed all three requirements within the first three years of his principate. The first gives form and purpose to the good beginning at Rome that Suetonius has seen in Domitian's principate.[31]

[28] Death of son: Vinson (n. 24), 439, holds that he died in the year following Domitian's accession: Suet. *Dom.* 3. 1 would need supplementing accordingly; the numismatic commemoration naturally belongs to 81–2 (full exposition in H. Temporini, *Die Frauen am Hofe Trajans. Ein Beitrag zur Stellung der Augustae im Prinzipat* (Berlin, N.Y., 1978), 101, n. 446.

[29] Rev.: *RIC* 2. 179 nos. 210f.; 182 no. 228f.; Obv. *RIC* 2. 179 nos. 212–15B; 182 nos. 228f.; 209 nos. 440–3.

[30] Livery: Suet. *Dom.* 12. 3, with denunciation of shared sovereignty.

[31] Good beginning: Suet. *Dom.* 3. 2; 9. 1; 10. 1.

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That was confirmed abroad by Domitian's early move against the Chatti – one of the wars that Suetonius has claimed he brought on himself.[32] And that came only a short while after Sabinus died in the aftermath of his consulship. (The herald had foolishly announced his election as Emperor![33]) A number of leading men had to be killed or exiled in the months and year that followed. Partly Domitian was completing a clear-out of Sabinus' friends, partly, as in the trial of the Vestal Virgins, beginning to show his determination to make his mark on government and to cleanse the ruling class, if I may use that term.[34]

So we come to the momentous events in which I too was involved. Some have supposed that two years into his principate Domitian was the object of an attempted conspiracy by a so-called 'Titus-party' with which I was connected.[35] The idea of a 'Titus-party' is strange after Titus's death, and whatever it means, it needs reformulation. The people involved are from too wide a circle, even including two patricians spared by Titus after they conspired against him, as well of course as Titus' daughter Julia as a figure-head.[36] No, it was as friends of Sabinus that men suffered, either as a preventative measure or because of rumblings from them in the aftermath of Sabinus' death.

Julia was shattered by the loss of her husband. She had been in the unique position of being a member of the imperial family who was Augusta with a living husband who was not Augustus;[37] now she would never be the wife of a Princeps, and unmarriageable: for why should Domitian work to produce a second Sabinus?[38] Still, she could not resist

[32] Wars voluntarily undertaken: Suet. *Dom.* 6. 1.

[33] Sabinus proclaimed Emperor: Suet. *Dom.* 10. 4. P. Gallivan, 'The Fasti for A.D.70–96', *CQ* 31 (1981), 189f.; 195f., assigns Sabinus two months; his colleague Domitian may have retired as usual in mid-January. The months after the consulship of 82 are most likely for his death. 'C. 84', MacDermott and Orentzel (n. 4), 76. Most scholars opt for 87: H. Castritius, 'Zu den Frauen der Flavier', *Hist.* 18 (1969), 498 n. 31; Syme, *RP* 7. 560.

[34] Eusebius-Jerome dates conspiracies in 83, and 82–3 for the trial of the Vestals. Dio (Xiph.) 67. 3. 3^{1-2}; Eus. *Hist. Eccl.* 3. 17; Eus.-Jer. 190 Helm, year III, *Ann. Abr.* 2099 (= 1 Oct. 82–30 Sept. 83); Vestals: Pliny, *Ep.* 4. 11. 6; Suet. *Dom.* 8. 4; Dio 67. 3. 4f. (83); Armenian Eus.: Oct. 81–82; Eus.-Jer.: year III, 83–4; *Chron. Pasch.* 89. On Ti. Iulius, the father of Claudius Etruscus, *a rationibus* and exiled in 82–3, P. R. C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: a social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge, 1972), 285–90, discussing Stat. *Silv.* 3. 3, suggests that Domitian was sweeping away an official connected with Titus; he was recalled, but not until 90.

[35] 'Titusanhängern': Castritius (n. 33), 497f. (political marriage: 496), criticizing modern views (his n. 21); *contra*, Jones (n. 12), 36.

[36] Victims: Jones, (n. 12), 36 (and his n. 55), lists from T. F. Baxter, *Domitian and the Senate* (diss., Toronto, 1974), 11f.: Ulpii, Vettuleni, Caesennii; Ti. Julius Alexander, Flavius Silva; 443, n.148: Civica Cerialis; 487, n. 146: Pegasus, Ursus. Patricians: Suet. *Tit.* 9. 1f.

[37] Julia's title: McCrum and Woodhead (n. 16), no. 11 (p. 19); *RIC* 2. 122, no. 139f.; Temporini (n. 28), 31.

[38] Domitian could, like Tiberius in 33 (Tac. *Ann.* 6. 15. 1), marry off eligible young female

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his pressing invitation to give up the home she had shared with Sabinus and move into the palace. It was virtual house arrest: we didn't want her forming a clique like the disgruntled Agrippina.[39]

It was paradoxical that this move almost brought about a very different relationship. Domitian, having got rid of his cousin, took it into his head to replace him as Julia's husband. He was always capable of clever radical solutions: witness his edict on the cutting down of vines.[40] What Suetonius has written, that Domitian seduced Julia during her father's lifetime, is due to the desire to blacken him at all costs.[41] It was a clever solution to annihilate the menace by marrying her and so taking over the prestige that accrued to her from her popular father; Domitian had already done something like this thirteen years before, with me, and so Claudius had married his popular niece Agrippina, daughter of Germanicus. But this alliance would give Domitian the additional advantage of being married, as Tiberius and Nero had been, to his predecessor's daughter.

It would mean getting rid of me. A pretext of infertility was not quite convincing: the son I had already given the Emperor had been celebrated on the coinage, but we had had no children after him, and it would have to do.[42] The idea that it was on a charge of adultery with the actor Paris, who had recently been killed in a street brawl, is absurd and due to the hunger for scandal among the populace, and to the wish to make a story of Domitian's inconsistency among the upper classes, who were suffering from his severe treatment of adultery.[43] If there had been anything in a charge like that, I could hardly have avoided trial and exile, even death. Domitian would not have cared to be liable to a charge of pimping.

Domitian was set on the marriage, and I left the palace, leaving Julia in possession. To be fair to her, though, she was no keener on the change than I was. She had no reason to love the man who had killed her husband. We Roman women have a tradition of loyalty to our men. But she had no choice, and after all would return to a status that she had not enjoyed since her father died. But Pliny's meaningful remarks about the

relatives to impossible candidates, not though the daughter of a deceased emperor; and in any case after the accession of the Flavians social eligibility had sunk almost too far for any senator to be disqualified. MacDermott and Orentzel (n. 4), 93, regard Julia as marriageable.

[39] Agrippina expelled from the Palace (a reverse move): Tac. *Ann.* 13. 20. 5.

[40] Vine edict: Suet. *Dom.* 7. 2; 14. 2.

[41] Seduction: Suet. *Dom.* 22; Dio 67. 3. 2. Murison (n. 6), 217, considering a reconciliation of these authors, notes that 'mox' would have to be taken as 'soon'.

[42] Infertility: Vinson (n. 24), 444, accepts this as the true reason.

[43] Adultery: Castritius (n. 33), 497, n. 23. Severity on adultery: Suet. *Dom.* 10. 3.

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rare amity between Trajan's wife and his sister are only giving an old cliché a run for its money.[44] Julia and I understood each other.

But the marriage came to nothing, and I returned to the palace.[45] That has been exploited by my husband's detractors: not only was he a tyrant in public, he was a weakling and vacillator in private.[46] There was more to it than that. I still had my friends and protégés, and they had done well from my marriage. Domitian had to consider whether executing his cousin and then following it up with divorcing his wife to marry the widow would be acceptable to the public. You will not be surprised to hear that there was a popular demonstration in the amphitheatre too.[47] Members of the imperial family in distress had frequently had the people on their side: Julia the Elder, when they defied Augustus' anger with his daughter and eventually forced a concession; Agrippina the Elder and her sons and Nero's wife Octavia, but ineffectively.[48] This time the demonstrations were more successful: Domitian's options were finely balanced, and neither of them pleasant. Just as he was to be amenable to advice on the dangers of the vine edict, now he realized that alienating a completely different set of politicians and public was more dangerous than letting Julia's resentment fester in the palace, where her presence was intended to suggest that she was on good terms with him. Julia's coins as well as mine show Concord on their reverses.[49] That gave enough scope for rumours to grow. Then she died and of course it was said that it was a result of having to abort Domitian's child.[50]

Paradoxically again it was a kinsman of Julia's who had helped persuade Domitian to give up his idea. This man was Julius Ursus, 'the Bear'. But Ursus had more tact than that animal. He was linked with the Flavian dynasty from way back.[51] His ancestor Julius Lupus (the

[44] Trajan's female relatives: Pliny, *Pan.* 84. 2.

[45] Castritius (n. 33), 498, offers more than one explanation of Domitian's failure to marry Julia: the poor example of Claudius' marriage to Agrippina the Younger, and (better) the offence to Domitia's friends.

[46] Vacillation: Vinson (n. 24), 444, makes this charge against Domitian the basis for the divorce-for-adultery story.

[47] Demonstrations: Suet. *Dom.* 13. 1. Castritius (n. 33), 499, cites the precedents for the demonstration and notes that the political nature of the crisis is shown by it.

[48] Earlier demonstrations: Julia I: Dio 55. 13. 1; Agrippina I: Tac. *Ann.* 5. 4. 3–5; Octavia: Tac. *Ann.* 14. 61.

[49] Julia and Concord: *RIC* 2. 181, no. 217 (uncertain date); Domitia: 179f., nos. 212f. and 215ff. (82–3 onwards and *c.* 90).

[50] Date of Julia's death: Murison (n. 6), 217; she is included in the Arval vows of 3 Jan., 87 and omitted from those of 90.

[51] Ursus: Jones (n. 12), 40; Murison (n. 6), 216 traces the process of his identification: Syme

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Wolf) had been in the group that had assassinated Gaius Caligula, when Arrecinus Clemens was Prefect of the Guard. In fact he had killed Caligula's wife Caesonia, who was my father's half-sister. Now Ursus made amends. He advised Domitian of the danger of what he was doing.

Domitian was ungrateful. Ursus was badly rewarded for his advice. He lost his job as Prefect of the Guard and instead was put into the Senate, with a wretched suffect consulship.[52] He was saved from worse by the intervention of Julia herself; when he asked Domitian why he was losing his job, my husband told him that he had shown insufficient joy at the Emperor's exploits in Germany.[53] For, after I returned to the Palace, Domitian set out for the north and his victory over the Chatti, which was intended to wipe out his family difficulties.[54] Before the summer was out Domitian had been awarded the title Germanicus for his success.[55]

Settling with Sabinus and triumphing over the Chatti gave my husband the confidence to take the censorship and then to extend it indefinitely beyond the proper eighteen months. It gave him just the control over the governing elite that he wanted. But there were still family problems. Only the year after Ursus' consulship his uncle and Julia's, M. Arrecinus Clemens, held his second, and became Prefect of the City. He had been friendly with Domitian, but the split over the plan to marry Julia was his eventual downfall.[56] Now was the time for the story to surface of his father's involvement in the assassination of Gaius

(n. 11), 55; 635f.; 'Guard Prefects of Trajan and Hadrian', *JRS* 70 (1980), 66 (= *Roman Papers* Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1984), 1279f.). H. Pavis d'Escurac, *La Préfecture de l'Annone: Service administratif imp. d'Aug. à Commode, BEFRA* (Rome, 1976), 45, 52, 327, has reservations. Jones (n. 27), 137f., gives a cautious account.

[52] Transfer to the senate: *PBerol.* 8384; consulships: F. Zevi, 'Nuovi Frammenti dei Fasti Ostienses', *Akten des VI Intern. Kongr. dür gr. u. lat. Epigraphik* (Munich, 1973), 437–9. Ursus served again: II suff. March 98, *cos.* III 100, with Trajan; his adopted son L. Iulius Ursus Servianus (*PIR*^{2} I 631), suff. in the difficult year 90, cos. II 102, III 134, did even better, marrying Hadrian's sister. See R. Syme, 'The Testamentum Dasumii: some Novelties', *Chiron* 15 (1985), 46 (= *Roman Papers* 5 (Oxford, 1988) 526, with stemma).

[53] Julia's intervention: Dio 67. 4. 2.

[54] Dio 67. 3. 5 (Zon.) makes it clear that it was after the restoration of Domitia that the Emperor set out for Gaul and Germany. 83 for the main campaigns in Germany seems to hold out against the rival 82. McCrum and Woodhead (n. 16), 402, a military diploma attesting the discharge of troops on 19 Sept., 82, is unlikely to belong to a time of war. Bibliography: Murison (n. 6), 221, accepting the 'traditional' 83, effectively defended by J. K. Evans, 'The Dating of Domitian's war against the Chatti again', *Hist.* 24 (1975), 121–4, against B. W. Jones, 'The Dating of Domitian's war against the Chatti', *Hist.* 22 (1973), 79ff., and listing traditional views at 80, n. 10; see also Jones (n. 12), 128.

[55] Germanicus: T. V. Buttrey, *Documentary evidence for the Chronology of the Flavian Titulature. Beitr. z. kl. Phil.* 112 (Meisenheim am Glan, 1980), 52ff.: 9 June-28 Aug. 83.

[56] M. Arrecinus Clemens: *PIR*^{2} A 1072. Death: Suet. *Dom.* 11. 2. Prefect: *AE* 1947. 40. See B. W. Jones, 'La Chute de M. Arrecinus Clemens', *Par. Pas.* 146 (1972), 320f.

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Caligula and above all of Julius Lupus' murder of Caesonia and his cowardly death.[57]

The events of the first three years of Domitian's reign had alienated others too. There were fresh signs of discontent. Domitian repressed open rebellions very smartly, and he was neat in nipping conspiracy in the bud. But I could not approve of his games of cat and mouse with social equals, especially the dinner party he gave which from beginning to end reminded his guests of their own mortality.[58] And in his last years he allowed factions in the senate to have their way with each other. With attacks on his imperial majesty an infallible way of securing guilty verdicts in such struggles, it was men committed in loyalty to Domitian who got the best of it. The so-called 'philosophers' were executed or sent into exile.

Domitian's death, you might say, was due to me, but not in the way writers have claimed. Six years before it, we thought that we were going to have another child, and it was even celebrated in verse.[59] It would have made my place safer. But it came to nothing. And then Domitian made a mistake on precisely this point. He still had a potential grown-up heir: his cousin, the younger brother of Flavius Sabinus. With any other Emperor, Flavius Clemens might have become a partner in power, as Tiberius had been to Augustus and Titus to Vespasian. The mature partner in power is a life insurance policy. That would not do for my husband. Domitian would have only the two eldest sons of his large family, adopting them as 'Domitian' and 'Vespasian'. The act acknowledged that after that last abortive pregnancy, when I was approaching forty, he had no hope of children by me. As to Clemens, no sooner did his consulship make him eligible for the grant of tribunician power than he too was killed. It was Sabinus all over again. Domitian did not see that in signing Clemens' death warrant he was signing his own.

My husband's death was dangerous and politically catastrophic for me. My father's half sister, Caesonia, had already died when her husband fell. That prolix sycophant Pliny said four years after the assassination that Trajan's women would not be in any danger if they became private individuals again: they had never stopped being just that.[60] My life with Domitian, and my family, gave me a more public life than Plotina, the Matidias, and Sabina enjoyed, quite apart from the fact

[57] Jos. *Ant.* 19. 1–273, with T. P. Wiseman, *Death of an Emperor: Flavius Josephus. Exeter Stud. in Hist.* 30 (Exeter, 1991), accepting Cluvius Rufus as the source; the later Fabius Rusticus might also be possible.

[58] Funereal feast: Dio 67. 9. 1–6.

[59] Possible pregnancy: Mart. 6. 3.

[60] Pliny, *Pan.* 84. 6: 'Neque enim umquam periclitabuntur esse privatae quae non desierunt.'

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that both Trajan and Hadrian were more interested in boys. But 'public' does not necessarily mean 'influential'. When literary men write about Domitian's régime they do not have much to say about my 'influence', or that of the freedmen. He had them under control.[61] Only Paris was known for the brokering of offices, as the imperial freedmen and wives had been in the past: Messalina, Agrippina, and Vespasian's mistress Caenis. Look carefully at the praise offered to Plotina by Pliny in the *Panegyricus*. It has nothing about her avoidance of this failing, which would have implied that I had fallen into it. My past and my connexions would have made it natural for me to have done so. But you should not give me too much credit for abstinence. My husband was a man intent on taking and exercizing power; the opportunities for courtiers to exercize their own patronage were more limited, perhaps, than at any time since the Principate was founded.

And yet everyone who writes on the subject accuses me of being involved in the assassination.[62] I am placed at the end of the list of assassins as a makeweight. The same motive, fear, is ascribed to me as to the real conspirators: I had been hated by Domitian ever since the Paris scandal: of course that story depends on the authenticity of the Paris affair, and I have already alluded to that. At Domitian's death it was thirteen years old. Domitian had failed to rid himself of me then, and, his reason for doing so, Julia, had been dead at least half a dozen years. And now he had his little heirs. One of the stories is elaborate, and circumstantial in a way that rouses suspicion. I am made to give the conspirators the list of doomed men that Domitian kept under his pillow. One of his boys took it during the day, and I then chanced on it. I am made out to be instrumental in what happens, but not manifestly active and guilty, rather saving some of my husband's intended victims.

[61] Domitian dispensed with informers such as Baebius Massa: *PIR*^{2} B 27.

[62] Domitia involved: Suet. *Dom.* 14. 1, without qualification (she was in with the friends and confidential freedmen); Dio 67. 15. 2 mentions Domitia as 'aware' of the conspiracy, like the praetorian prefects Norbanus (*PIR*^{2} N 162, until 95 governor of Raetia) and T. Petronius Secundus (P 308, Prefect of Egypt 92–3; his successor there M. Iunius Rufus, M 812, attested on 1 July 94). *Epit. de Caes.* 11. 11: 'ascita in consilium'. Freedmen: Dio 67. 17. 2; Suet. *Dom.* 17. 1f., adding Clodianus the *cornicularius*, Satur the *decurio cubiculariorum*, and some gladiators. Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 11. 7; *Epit. de Caes.* 11. 11, with Castritius (n. 33), 502, urging that this version allows the political background to emerge, though clothed in 'personal' dress. The *Epitome de Caesaribus* has her brought in to a conspiracy that already existed. Castritius noticed (496) that the head of one of the last conspiracies against Domitian was Ser. Cornelius Scipio Salvidienus Orfitus (*PIR*^{2} C 1445; Suet. *Dom.* 10. 2), great-grandson of Vistilia, and so kin to Domitia; but his high lineage and the fate of his father, the consul of 51 (*PIR*^{2} C 1444) killed by Nero *c.* 66 (Suet. *Nero* 37. 1; Dio 62. 27. 1; cf. Tac. *Hist.* 4. 42), made him vulnerable.

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I ask you! At best, a new Princeps must renounce Domitian's régime, of which I was a part, and I would have to rely on the gratitude of the new incumbent for my rôle in getting him his position.[63] In fact my husband was assassinated by servants afraid of being denounced, in one case for financial misconduct; Stephanus, besides being procurator of Clemens' wife Flavia Domitilla, was on a charge of embezzlement, and money was something that Domitian was very particular about, for good reason.[64]

Obviously, in the aftermath it was in the interests of everyone including me that I should seem to be involved: the tyrant had to be hated by all, even his wife. No question of my devotedly interring the remains. That is why Suetonius, that master of the archive and the keyhole, was able to say that I never had any hesitation in admitting other scurrilous charges than the one that I slept with Titus:[65] of course I admitted being seduced by Domitian, and I had to acquiesce in the murder charge. With Domitian dead and condemned there was no point in anyone denying their involvement. But for me there was no way to come out with credit: the alternative rôles in which I was cast were partner to the tyrant or assassin of my husband. Or both.

Of course I was now as unmarriageable as Julia had been: to aspire to an Emperor's widow was suspect; to take on the shadow of Domitian odious. I have disappeared from public view since then, except for the casual and derogatory references in Suetonius' *Life* of my husband, and of course my small part in Tacitus' *Histories* – I always felt he disapproved of me. Can you wonder that I want the truth to come out?

[63] E. R. Verner, 'Domitia Longina and the politics of portraiture', *AJA* 99 (1995), 187ff., has her involved; Murison (n. 6), 215 appositely quotes against this view Tacitus' comment in *Hist.* 1. 44. 2 on emperors and assassins.

[64] Suetonius makes Stephanus the prime assassin, with Clodianus, a Guard officer, and Maximus, freedman of the privileged chamberlain Ti. Claudius Parthenius, coming to his aid along with Satur, marshal of the servants of the bedchamber, and a person from the gladiatorial school. Dio ranks Parthenius first: it was he who set up the conspiracy and was in a position to send in reinforcements. Next he mentions Sigerus, who may be identical with Satur, since he is also described as chamberlain, Entellus, *a libellis*, and Stephanus.

[65] Sleeping with Titus: Suet. *Tit.* 10. 2.

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