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In Ancient Rome, women were considered to be inferior to men and were not openly allowed to take a public role in politics. Some women, however, refused to passively accept this and instead inserted themselves into the political world. Women found different ways to secure legal rights and privileges while being influential in various political movements (Bauman 1994, Lefkowitz and Fant 1992, and Onayemi 2007). Royal women, furthermore, were especially able to use their class status and relationships with men in positions of power to achieve political influence (Burns 2007 and Lefkowitz and Fant 1992).

One of the most politically powerful and influential royal women in Roman history was Livia Drusilla, wife of Augustus. Livia used her relationships with the men around her to influence political policy and decisions as well as elevate her own status. Livia was not only a powerful political force who worked through the men around her, but also the public image of the ideal Roman woman (Barrett 2002, Bartman 1999, Flory 1988 and 1993, Grether 1946, Bauman 1994, Deckman 1925, and Johnson 1997). Livia’s successful acquisition of power can be seen not only through various literatures at the time, but also through artwork erected for her and titles glorifying her. Bartman, Flory, and Grether analyze the titles given to her and the statues and other artwork created to honor her. While some historians like Barrett take a neutral approach to analyzing Livia’s life, others such as Bauman view her as a deceptive, manipulative woman who took advantage of the people around her to gain more power and prestige. Other historians such as Deckman, Flory, and Johnson take the opposite view and argue that the negative accounts of Livia were biased and written as anti Julio-Claudian propaganda. They
argue not only that Livia was indeed the model wife and woman, but also that she was clever enough to be successful in both the public and private realms of Roman society.

Before Livia was an influential leader in Rome, Cleopatra VII was the ruler of Egypt until her demise at the hands of Augustus. Cleopatra was the sole queen of Egypt and was the known as quite a remarkable woman (Ullman 1957, Volkmann 1958, Walker and Higgs 2001, Burstein 2007, DeForest 1989, Kleiner 2005, Broughton 1942, Holland 1997, Johnson 1967, and Preston 2009). Historians, as with Livia, portray Cleopatra in both positive and negative light. Broughton, for example, argues that some historians give her too much credit as a popular ruler and that she was indeed corrupt. Holland, Johnson, and Preston, on the other hand, argue that Cleopatra was a brilliant, astonishing woman and leader. They all argue that history has a biased view against her, because Augustus ran a very successful propaganda campaign against her during their conflict. They all go on to add that Romans were biased against Cleopatra and so always portrayed her unfairly in a negative way. Some historians such as Walker, Higgs, Burstein, DeForest, and Kleiner take a more neutral view of Cleopatra and discuss her life while acknowledging the biases in the sources they use.

I intend to survey these sources in order to address the following questions: Why was Cleopatra able to rule Egypt without a male counterpart, yet Livia could only rule through her influence over the men around her? How did Livia rule through Augustus and Tiberius? What are the barriers each woman faced in acquiring power and respect from the citizens? How did the Roman writers portray Livia and Cleopatra and did their portrayal, Furthermore, represent the views of the Roman people? What were and what caused the similarities and differences between the political situations of Livia and Cleopatra?

If the scope of my project is too narrow, then I will expand it by looking at Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi. If this is also not enough, then I will also look at Agrippina in order to get a richer and more complete understanding of the Romans' view of women in positions of power and great influence.
I will be using a historical analysis to study and learn about Livia and Cleopatra. I will mainly be reviewing and analyzing literature, namely scholarly articles and books written by classicists. I will also be looking at what Roman poets such as Ovid and Horace wrote about Livia and Cleopatra. I will also be looking at what Roman historians such as Tacitus and Cassius Dio wrote about Livia. Overall, I believe these are the most efficient and effective methods to gather and organize information that will help me answer my thesis project questions.
Bibliography


Holland, Barbara. “Cleopatra: What kind of a woman was she, anyway?.” *Smithsonian* 27.11 (1997): 56.


