



Photo by Jan Trembley '75



Courtesy of the Museo Nazionale Romano

Left: Bryn Mawr's "Juno" in its former location under Canaday Library steps, is a copy of the "Juno Ludovisi," right, on display at Rome's Palazzo Altemps.

GODDESS OR WOMAN?

Whom or what does Bryn Mawr's copy of the "Juno Ludovisi" portray?

By SUSAN E. WOOD '73

Two great pleasures of a Bryn Mawr Reunion weekend are seeing familiar faces and making new acquaintances who have long and deep attachments to the institution. In May of 1998, I had the unusual experience of doing both at once, although the familiar face in question was carved in marble and over twice life-size.

The handsome, classical-style head that sat in the rock garden under the steps of Canaday Library had languished in storage during my undergraduate days. In the interim, however, I had seen, studied, and written about the ancient work that it duplicates, the colossal head known as "Juno Ludovisi." The 19th century copy, probably now quite valuable in its own right, has become something of a Bryn Mawr icon since its emergence from storage, appearing on T-shirts and Bryn Mawr publications, sometimes bedecked with punky, multi-colored hair. The Juno Ludovisi likewise has enjoyed a minor resurrection since its reinstallation in the Palazzo Altemps in Rome, after many years unceremoniously confined to a wooden crate.

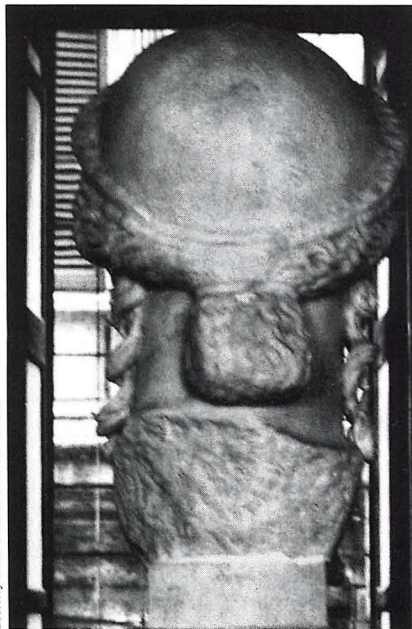
Not many people today have heard of the Juno Ludovisi, but it was very celebrated once, particularly

among German scholars and intellectuals of the 18th and 19th centuries who admired its elegantly classicizing style. Goethe owned a cast of it; when he traveled to Rome, he was particularly eager to see the original, and it did not disappoint him. But whom or what it represents remains controversial. As with so many antiquities, unfortunately, its place and date of discovery are unknown, leaving us to infer what we can only from the object itself.

This head originally belonged to a statue: the rounded plug at the base of the neck would have fit into a socket in a separately carved torso. The complete work would have been enormous, looming high above the viewer's eye level. Such colossal scale suggests a cult statue of a goddess in a temple, and as the name "Juno Ludovisi" implies, that is exactly what everyone assumed for years. The serenely beautiful face, with its idealized, regular features, the straight line from forehead to nose, and the heavy, rounded line of the jaw and chin, all conformed to Greek and Roman conventions for deities. But colossal scale was appropriate for other types of images as well. Literary records, for example, tell us that the emperor Caligula dedicated a statue of his beloved sister Drusilla, after she died, in the temple of Venus Genetrix, and that

the statue was equal in scale to that of the goddess. Drusilla had been deified, and could appropriately appear in this manner alongside the divine ancestress of her family. Archaeological discoveries of sculptures and datable inscriptions indicate that colossal images could sometimes even honor subjects who were still alive.

Conceivably, then, the “Juno Ludovisi” could represent some real person. And as Andreas Rumpf noticed in 1941, a few features of this work do not belong on the image of a major goddess. One of them is the hairdo. From the front, the hair conforms per-



Back view of Rome “Juno Ludovisi’s” hairdo.

fectly to standard images of goddesses: it is parted simply in the middle, and drawn back in soft waves that partly cover the ears, while long corkscrew curls on each side hang to the shoulders. But in back, we can see that the lady is not wearing a classical-style bun, but a loop of tightly bound braids that hang down the nape of her neck. Real women, not goddesses, wear this hairdo in portraits of the first century A.D. Furthermore, one of her attributes belongs to a human priestess or deified mortal. Around the base of her high, crescent-shaped diadem is a thick fabric band strung at regular intervals with little beads. Two long strips hang down from it on each side of her neck, intertwined with her loose locks of hair. This ornament is an “infula,” a band worn “in the manner of a diadem (i.e., encircling the head) from which fillets hang down on each side.” (*Isid. Orig.* 1.30.4). The infula can identify the wearer as a priestess or a suppliant, and can also be draped on altars, or on the horns of sacrificial animals. Its exact meaning depends on context, but it confers an aura of sanctity on some mortal being or man-made thing.

The face of Antonia Minor?

Rumpf compared the “Juno” to coin-portraits of known individuals, and concluded that the subject must be Antonia Minor, the daughter of Marc Antony and his Roman wife Octavia, the niece of Rome’s first emperor Augustus, and the mother of the promising young gen-



Antonia Minor, Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Fund in memory of John Randolph Coleman III, Harvard Class of 1964 and the David M. Robinson Fund.

eral Germanicus, whom Augustus had chosen near the end of his life as an heir to imperial power. Germanicus did not live to become emperor, but his brother Claudius—to everyone’s great surprise—did. Claudius, a physically disabled man whom many mistakenly believed to be mentally impaired as well, had the intelligence to recognize his “image problems.” He set about remedying them in a traditionally Roman manner, by glorifying his parents and distinguished ancestors. Many good portrait profiles of his mother Antonia, therefore, appear on his coins, and they show beyond a doubt that she

Bryn Mawr’s ‘Juno’: return to dignity from the dark and the farm

Juno was part of a group of 28 marbles busts executed for Mary E. Garrett in the Rome studio of American sculptor William H. Rinehart, who also designed the bronze doors for the U.S. Capitol. Loaned to the College by Garrett in 1893, the busts stood on golden oak pedestals in Taylor Hall. The colossal heads of Zeus and Juno faced one another at either end of the central corridor. The busts, whose ownership M. Carey Thomas eventually acquired from Garrett, remained in the corridors until about 1938-40, when they were moved to storage in Taylor basement and lay staring up in the dark, according to archival records. In honor of Garrett, the smaller busts and perhaps the Zeus were ultimately given by the Bryn Mawr Trustees to the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1953. Deep in the basement, however, Juno could

not be found and still belongs to Bryn Mawr’s Alumnae Association as part of the M. Carey Thomas Trust. At some undetermined time, Juno went to storage at a farm property near Newtown Square, PA owned by the College. When that property was sold, she returned to the main campus and at the suggestion of then Artist in Residence, Fritz Janschka, was placed under the steps of Canaday Library in April 1980. Two decades of exposure to the elements have been hard on the marble head. Therefore the College’s Collections staff recommended that it be moved indoors. This May, the 1,500 pound Juno was moved with rigs and five art handlers to Carpenter Library, where she will be treated by a Bryn Mawr alumna conservator and remain on display.

Information courtesy of the College’s Collections

parted her hair in the middle, drew it back simply, and bound it into a loop of braids down the nape of her neck. Some coins also proudly identify her as the “Priestess of the Deified Augustus,” an office that Antonia only held for a short time before her death, but a prestigious title nonetheless. The beaded strands of an infula are often clearly visible on these coin portraits. Many scholars find this evidence conclusive: the identification of the “Juno Ludovisi” as Antonia enjoys widespread agreement.

A few of us are not quite so sure. Antonia’s likeness survives not only on coins but on at least 13 works of sculpture, all of which closely follow a common prototype. Some of these replicas are a little more flattering than others, but all consistently show individualized features like her long, narrow nose and tapering chin. Furthermore, although Antonia’s hairdo resembles the “Juno’s,” it is not exactly the same. Her hair is always pulled back very severely, leaving the ears fully exposed, and although a hair-ribbon always appears above her forehead, it cannot be seen encircling the head, like an infula: the waves of hair at the temples and sides of the face conceal it from view. The “Juno Ludovisi” could be a free adaptation of this type, but it contrasts jarringly with Antonia’s more secure portraits. Some scholars, indeed, remain convinced that such an ideal face cannot belong to a real woman, and staunchly maintain that the identification as a major goddess is correct after all.

Livia, poisoner or nurturer?

In my opinion, the Julio-Claudian period hairdo and the infula are evidence too strong to ignore. There are, however, other possible candidates besides Antonia. Rolf Winkes identifies the “Juno” as Livia, the wife of Augustus, mother of his heir Tiberius, great-grandmother of Caligula, grandmother of Claudius, and great-great-grandmother of Nero. That set of relationships alone would be enough to explain why her portraits are so plentiful, surviving in at least 124 securely identified examples: every emperor of the first dynasty of Rome could trace his line to her. Claudius, furthermore, made her a goddess, creating an additional demand



Livia as Ceres, Roma, Musei Capitolini.

for images of the new diva long after her death. There are other reasons as well, however, why so many of her images survive. Throughout her life, Livia used her influence with Augustus and Tiberius to the benefit of many people, presenting petitions to them on behalf of cities and individuals. Ovid, writing to his wife from exile, asked her to plead for more lenient conditions—not to Augustus himself, but to Livia. Since Livia had no official

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power, Ovid evidently expected her to forward that request to her husband. She also enjoyed great wealth and control of her own property, a special privilege that she received in 35 B.C. Livia used her financial independence shrewdly, to undertake both public works and private acts of generosity that promoted social and political agendas. For example, she gave people money for their daughters’ dowries, or funds to raise children—a practice that could make the difference between life and death in an era when unwanted babies were often exposed to die. She also sponsored the restoration of temples and the construction of new public buildings, all designed to promote and

celebrate “family values” and to encourage the virtues of good wives, for whom she, like all “first ladies,” was a role-model. The citizens of Lep-tis Magna loved her so much that soon after her death, they built a small temple to her in a very public place, at the top of the theater, and began to worship her as a goddess even though she had not yet been formally deified, an honor that she would not receive for some years yet.

Livia’s portraits are not only far more numerous than Antonia’s, but much more richly varied. At least four or five separate types can be identified for her, and each of those official prototypes received a variety of treatments at the hands of copyists throughout the empire, some departing freely from the types to give her a more idealized treatment. Her earlier portraits show a prim and rather frumpy coiffure, in which the hair over the forehead is swept up into a little topknot. Several variants on this hairdo from her husband’s lifetime, however, show a softening of the severe fashion, and a softer and fuller treatment of the waves of hair around her face. Soon after the death and deification of her husband, Livia became the priestess of his cult, received other important honors as well, and with them, apparently, a new portrait type. These newer images dispense with the topknot, showing her hair parted simply in the middle, and drawn back in soft waves that partly cover the ears. The hair at the nape of the neck can either be fastened into a bun or into a loop of braids, in the newer fashion, and she often has long, cascading locks falling to the shoulders. As a priestess, moreover, she was entitled to wear the infula, and some statues unmistakably show this attribute. After her death, copyists interpret her image with increasing flamboyance, tearing into the marble with deep drill-channels that transform her simple waves of hair into a dramatic aureole around her face. In the company of these posthumous portraits of Livia, the “Juno Ludovisi” suddenly makes sense, and fits coherently into the development of Livia’s images. Compared to those of Antonia, on the other hand, it stands out like a sore thumb from the 13 other portrait like, life-size representations of the lady.

Historians who hate women

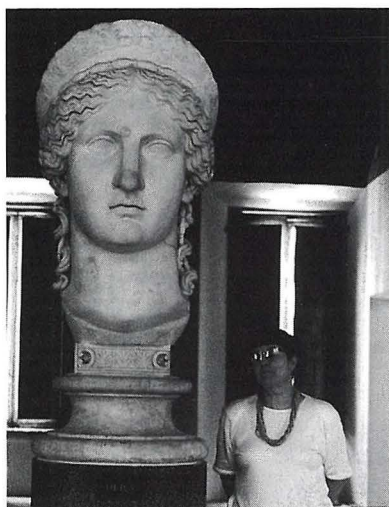
Anyone who knows Livia primarily from the novel or BBC series *I Claudius* may be astounded at the evidence that she was such a beloved figure. Wasn't she the vicious poisoner who heartlessly eliminated every rival for power? In fact, Robert Graves's memorable if rather one-dimensional characterization comes almost entirely from the Roman historian Tacitus, who hated all powerful and intelligent women with a passion difficult to comprehend unless you have had a chat with one of Rush Limbaugh's "ditto-heads" on the subject of Hillary Rodham Clinton. Tacitus despised the imperial system of government, and believed, as most Americans would readily agree, that its worst feature was the ruler's lack of accountability. The abuse of that power by many Roman emperors is beyond dispute. But although Tacitus piously protested that he was writing "without anger or partisanship," *sine ira et studio*, he obviously wanted to whip up the indignation of his readers. An easy route to that goal is a shameless pitch to the lowest prejudices. Roman society was patriarchal in the most literal sense of that much-overused word, and most male readers would regard an uncontrolled, power-seeking woman as a horror. Therefore, Tacitus presents almost every unpopular decision, every prosecution that appeared to be malicious and unjustified, and every suspected poisoning, as the work not of the man in power but of a woman scheming behind the scenes. By portraying the male emperors as the weak patsies of these women, Tacitus can smear them with "feminization," always a popular slur against any ruler or regime.

In the cases of poisoning plots, we must remember that even with modern forensic methods, poison is very difficult to detect. In antiquity, methods for determining causes of death were far more rudimentary. On the other hand, anyone can insinuate that a young man who fell ill and died was the victim of poison, and the charge can never be disproved. One of the traditional roles of women throughout history has been to care for the sick—leaving women, ironically, vulnerable to charges of poisoning or witchcraft if the patient should

die. "Woman the poisoner" is the dark side of the positive stereotype of "woman the nurturer."

Low on artistic 'food chain'

The reputation of the "Juno Ludovisi," like that of the woman it represents, has also had its ups and downs. Few people now admire it for its beauty, as Goethe did. Twentieth century scholarship has confined itself largely to the problem of identification. Personally, I find this head very impressive, a work with majestic presence, but few people today would make a special trip to the Palazzo Altemps to see it. Why, after its great popularity in earlier centuries, has



Shirley Schwartz, Professor of Archaeology and Art History at the University of Evansville, poses as a scale-figure with the Rome Juno Ludovisi.

it dropped into relative oblivion? Perhaps because we know more about it: although the debate continues about its identity, almost everyone now agrees that it is a Roman portrait, not a Greek goddess. Portraiture has historically been rather low on the artistic "food chain," constituting one of the lower ranked genres in the 18th and 19th century academies. And Roman sculptors tend to be regarded as hacks, at best slavishly imitating and at worst debasing the great traditions of Greek art. Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, Ph.D. '58, Rhys Carpenter Professor Emerita of Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology, who taught so many Bryn Mawr students so much about ancient sculpture, has always had a thing or

two to say about this very unfair prejudice, yet it remains a persistent attitude even among people who should know better. And finally, the classicizing style that so appealed to earlier generations has fallen into disrepute today, thanks in part to its popularity with the brutal dictators and Fascist hack-artists of the 1930's and 40's.

But among viewers who are not familiar with the antiquarian debates about this sculpture, the calm dignity of the ideal face still impresses people. The Bryn Mawr copy of the Juno has obviously become an object of affection for the students, although their attention may have sometimes been rather destructive; multicolored paints are amusing, but harmful to the surfaces of old marbles. During my Reunion weekend, I bought a T-shirt featuring "Juno's" face, only to discover to my dismay that it also sported the slogan "113 years of castrating bitches." Far be it from me to infringe on the free speech of my fellow Bryn Mawrters, but I would have preferred a slightly different wording: "113 years of uppity broads," or perhaps, to borrow from Radcliffe, "113 years of women on top." But the fact remains that the students who see this handsome work obviously recognize it as an image of female dignity and female power, and in that respect, they've got it right. BMC

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