

## ANTONIA AND SEJANUS\*

The fall of Sejanus in A.D. 31 aroused considerable controversy in the ancient sources and has also continued to do so in modern research. Indeed, questions of Sejanus' intentions and of the identification of his allies and enemies still remain of great interest. No small part of this speculation concerns Antonia Minor, who is considered by an increasing number of scholars to have provided Tiberius with the critical information which led directly to the fall of Sejanus.<sup>1</sup> In one recent article on the family connections of Sejanus, it has been suggested that Antonia Minor, as a relative of Sejanus and a figure of no little influence, could have played a significant role not only in his fall but also in his rise to power.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between the two, the subject of much conjecture but little analysis, deserves to be considered in detail.

The following discussion will consist of three parts: I.) the alleged relationship between Antonia and Sejanus before 31, II.) the tradition that stresses Antonia's importance in the fall of Sejanus, and III.) based on the conclusions of the first two sections, a reconstruction of the process by which Antonia became associated with the events of 31.

It will here be argued that Antonia did not, in all probability, provide Tiberius with the critical information about the intentions of Sejanus. Her importance in the tradition is an invention of the Claudian and Flavian Periods.

## I. Antonia and Sejanus before 31

There seems to be a four-fold connection between Antonia and Sejanus in the years before A.D. 31. First, Tacitus notes that Junius Blaesus,

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<sup>1</sup> For the sources on Antonia's life see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 885. Her important role is accepted in most of the studies which treat the fall of Sejanus including: F.B. Marsh, *The Reign of Tiberius*, Oxford, 1931, 304; E. Koestermann, *Der Sturz Seians*, *Hermes* 83 (1955) 352f.; R. Syme, *Tacitus*, Oxford, 1958, 752, and more recently by G.V. Sumner, *The Family Connections of L. Aelius Sejanus*, *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 144; E. Meise, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Julisch-Claudischen Dynastie*, München, 1969, 85; H.W. Bird, *L. Aelius Sejanus and his Political Significance*, *Latomus* 28 (1969) 83 and R. Seager, *Tiberius*, London, 1972, 216f. <sup>2</sup> Sumner, 140f.

governor of Gallia Lugdunensis in 68/9 and grandson of Sejanus' uncle, could claim "*Junios Antoniosque avos*" (*Hist.* III, 38). Briefly, Sejanus' cousin, a Junius Blaesus (either *PIR*<sup>2</sup> I 736 or 739) was married to the granddaughter of Antonia's half sister.<sup>3</sup> Second, Claudius, Antonia's son, was married to Aelia Paetina, the daughter of Sejanus' adopted brother's (i.e. Seius Tubero's) cousin (Sex. Aelius Catus).<sup>4</sup> Third, Livilla, Antonia's daughter, was involved in Sejanus' plan and was prepared to marry him.<sup>5</sup> And, fourth, Claudius' son Drusus was betrothed to the daughter of Sejanus (*Tac. Ann.* IV, 7; *Suet. Cl.*, 27). All this leads Sumner to suggest: "The possibility that Antonia was in some sense allied with Sejanus will have to be born in mind in any attempt to understand the rise and fall of the Volsinian."<sup>6</sup>

These arguments are not, however, very persuasive. Generally speaking, the pattern of marriages in the Augustan Era had become so complex that Antonia could be considered related in some degree to most of the important families of the era. More specifically, the connections in the first two cases are too distant to justify any definite conclusions about an alliance. Regarding Claudius' marriage with Aelia Paetina, there is no evidence in the sources that Claudius married (before 19), divorced (between 20 and 40) or considered remarrying (in 48) Paetina because of her connection with Sejanus.<sup>7</sup> As for Livilla, she was clearly acting on her own (*Tac. Ann.* IV, 39): Antonia could hardly have approved of her daughter's behavior following the death of Drusus Tiberii f. in 23 which was so diametrically opposed to her own chastity following the death of Drusus the Elder (*Val. Max.* IV, 3.3). The rumor that Antonia punished Livilla for her complicity with Sejanus (*Dio* 58, 11.7) is consistent with the theory that Livilla was acting on her own behalf. Finally, Tacitus says directly that the betrothal of Drusus Claudii f. to Sejanus' daughter was the express wish of Tiberius. What Antonia may have thought cannot be determined, but Tacitus says that Sejanus was pleased with the thought that his grandchildren would carry the blood of the Drusi (*Tac. Ann.* IV, 7). That is, there is no indication that marriage finalized a secret alliance between Sejanus and Antonia; what Sejanus hoped to gain was prestige.

There is then no serious case for an alliance between Antonia and Sejanus. It might be added that, in contrast to his treatment of Livia Augusta and Agrippina the Elder, Tacitus gives no indication that Antonia was in any

<sup>3</sup> See Sumner's *Stemmata*, 137 (discussed on page 143) and *PIR*<sup>2</sup> I 737.

<sup>4</sup> Sumner, 141.

<sup>5</sup> On Livilla's relationship to Sejanus, see Meise, 49f.

<sup>6</sup> Sumner, 144.

<sup>7</sup> For the evidence, see *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 305 and especially *Suet. Cl.* 26.2, where it is stated that Aelia was divorced *ex levibus offensis*. The temptation to interpret these *offensis* as referring to a connection with Sejanus should, I feel, be resisted: if Sejanus was the cause it is difficult to understand why Suetonius does not say so directly.

way actively involved in the dynastic and political problems of the early principate.<sup>8</sup>

## II. Antonia and the fall of Sejanus

### A. The Sources

An epigram of the poet Honestus of Corinth has been interpreted by Cichorius as the earliest reference to Antonia's role in the fall of Sejanus.<sup>9</sup> This epigram, preserved as an inscription, is similar to thirteen other inscribed epigrams of Honestus celebrating the Heliconian Muses of Thespieae. It reads:

Ἡ δαιοὺς σκήπτροισι θεοὺς ἀρχοῦσα Σεβαστή  
 Καίσαρας, εἰρήνης δισσὰ λέλαμπε φάη·  
 ἐπρεψεν δὲ σοφαῖς Ἑλικωνιάσιν πυντόφρων  
 σύγχωρος, ἧς γε νόος κόσμον ἔσωσεν ὄλον·  
 Ὀνέστου

which may be translated:

Augusta, being proud of two godlike Caesars  
 with their sceptres, shines forth a twin light of peace;  
 Fit company for the wise Heliconian Muses, a choir mate  
 of wise counsel, whose sagacity saved the whole world  
 Honestus<sup>10</sup>

Cichorius has argued that the Augusta here is Antonia Minor, the two Caesars are Gaius Caligula and Tiberius Gemellus. The saving of the world refers to Antonia's exposure of the plot of Sejanus. The validity of this interpretation will be discussed below. Suffice it here to say that the identification is highly improbable.

Apart from this most doubtful reference, Flavius Josephus, writing at the end of the first century, is the first and only writer to assign directly to Antonia the major role in the discovery of Sejanus' alleged "conspiracy" against Tiberius. In Book xviii of the *AJ*, Josephus relates how his hero, M. Julius Agrippa I, had been imprisoned by Tiberius and how the former appealed to Antonia, an old friend of his mother, to use her influence in order to secure his release. Josephus here explains why Antonia was influential:

Now Antonia was highly esteemed by Tiberius both because, as the wife of his brother Drusus, she was related to him, and because she was a

<sup>8</sup> Tacitus' treatment of Antonia is generally positive, see for example *Ann.* III, 3 and Marsh, 304.

<sup>9</sup> C. Cichorius, *Römische Studien*, Leipzig und Berlin, 1922, 362. Honestus most likely lived under Augustus and Tiberius, see below page 51.

<sup>10</sup> Text from A.S.F. Gow and D.L. Page, *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip*, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1968, 276. The translation is basically that of this writer.

virtuous and chaste woman. For despite her youth she remained steadfast in her widowhood and refused to marry again although the emperor urged her to do so. She thus kept her life free from reproach. She on her own had done a very great service to Tiberius. For a great conspiracy (*ἐπιβουλῆς*) had been formed against him by his friend Sejanus, who at that time held very great power because he was prefect of the praetorian cohorts. Most of the senators and freedmen joined him, the army was bribed, and so the conspiracy made great progress. Indeed, Sejanus would have succeeded had not Antonia shown greater craft (*σοφωτέρα*) in her bold move than Sejanus did in his villainy. For when she was informed of the plot against Tiberius, she wrote him a full and accurate account of it and, entrusting the letter to Pallas, the most trustworthy of her slaves, sent it to Tiberius at Capri. Tiberius, being informed, put Sejanus and his fellow conspirators to death. As for Antonia, whom he had previously held in high regard, he now valued her even more and put full confidence in her. (*AJ* xviii, 180f.)<sup>11</sup>

It should be recognized that Josephus' report makes two allegations: 1.) Antonia was the critical informer, and 2.) Sejanus was plotting against Tiberius. He is the only source for both statements.

The next reference to Antonia's role in the fall of Sejanus appears in the writings of Cassius Dio, two centuries after the event. Concerning the excellent memory of Antonia's freedwoman Caenis (the mistress of Vespasian), Dio writes:

Her (Caenis') mistress Antonia, the mother of Claudius, had once employed her as a secretary in writing a secret letter to Tiberius about Sejanus (*περὶ τοῦ Σεϊανοῦ*) and had immediately ordered the message to be erased, in order that no trace of it might be left. Thereupon she replied: "It is useless, mistress, for you to give this command; for not only all this but also whatever else you dictate to me I always carry in my mind and it can never be erased." (66, 14)<sup>12</sup>

Though other sources speak of Sejanus' fall (e.g. Philo *leg.* 6; Tac. *Ann.* VI, 3; Suet. *Tib.* 65), there is no further mention of Antonia.

### B. Analysis of the sources

Honestus of Corinth is an obscure figure, but he probably lived during the early first century – during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius to be more exact.<sup>13</sup> The evidence for this date is, however, not very secure. Little may be derived from epigraphical arguments as the surviving epigrams from

<sup>11</sup> Loeb translation by L.H. Feldman.

<sup>12</sup> Loeb translation by E. Cary.

<sup>13</sup> See Gow and Page, Vol. II, 301; W. Peck, *Die Musen von Thespieae*, *Geras A. Keramopoulou*, Athens, 1953, 609f. and Louis Robert, *Bull. Ép.* 1955, No. 119, who discusses the earlier theories thoroughly.

Thespieae were engraved with Boeotian letters which have not generally been well studied. One may conclude only that the inscriptions in question were cut before A.D. 200.<sup>14</sup> The alternative method of dating Honestus, and a difficult one given the imprecise language used, has been to identify the Augusta and Caesars of the above cited epigram. Up to the present time, four imperial ladies have been suggested: Julia Augusti f. (with Gaius and Lucius as the Caesars), Livia (with Augustus and Tiberius or with Tiberius and the Elder Drusus), Antonia (with Gaius Caligula and Tib. Gemellus) and Julia Domna (with Geta and Caracalla).<sup>15</sup>

As can be seen from the variety of suggestions this epigram does not lend itself to easy interpretation. There are, however, sufficient arguments against Cichorius' identification of the Augusta as Antonia. First, though Antonia was given the title Augusta following the accession of Gaius in March 37, she rejected the use of it during her lifetime (She died 1 May 37<sup>16</sup>) and it was not commonly used before the reign of Claudius (Suet. *Gaius* 15.3; *Cl.* 11.2). Second, it is hard to imagine that any poet would have thought to place Tiberius Gemellus on the same level as Caligula at any time after March 37. And, in fact, there is no official propaganda commenting on the equal status of the two either before or after that date.

Moreover, there are two other more satisfactory candidates for the title, Julia Augusti f. and Livia. Louis Robert has summed up persuasively the arguments for assigning the title to Julia.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the identification of Julia and her sons C. and L. Caesar fits the inscription very well except for one problem: Julia never bore that title. It is true, however, that at least one other inscription refers to her unofficially as:

Ἰ[οὐ]λίαν θεὰν Σεβαστή[ν],<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, suspicion remains as Livia, an official Augusta, fits the description even better.

It is true that the previous identifications connecting Livia with Augustus and Tiberius<sup>19</sup> or with Tiberius and Drusus the Elder<sup>20</sup> are less satisfactory

<sup>14</sup> Peek, 612f. Robert is of the opinion, however, that there are analogies between this inscription and another one from Thespieae dated to between 17 and 12 B.C.

<sup>15</sup> See Robert for a bibliography and discussion. The suggestion of Julia Domna may be immediately ruled out due to the similarity of this epigram to the early first century *Garland of Philip*, Gow and Page, Vol. II, 301.

<sup>16</sup> And not in May, 38, as believed by Cichorius, 363. It is this error, giving Antonia a year instead of six weeks of life under Gaius, which, in this writer's opinion, substantially reduces the effectiveness of Cichorius' argument. On the date of her death, see the *Fasti Ost.* for the year 37 in Ehrenberg and Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*, Oxford, 1963 (= E.J.).

<sup>17</sup> Robert, *id.*

<sup>18</sup> IGRR iii, 940, an inscription from the temple of Venus at Paphos.

<sup>19</sup> Gow and Page, 301.

<sup>20</sup> P. Jamot, *Fouilles de Thespies*, BCH 26 (1902) 300.

than the identification of Julia with Gaius and Lucius. To the first pair it may be objected that it is highly improbable that Livia, as Augusta only after A.D. 14 (Tac. *Ann.* I, 8), would be mentioned as such on the first line and the deified Augustus, paralleled with Tiberius, only as Caesar on line two. The second identification suffers from a similar complication: Drusus was long dead when Livia received the title.<sup>21</sup>

The most satisfactory identification, and one not previously suggested, is Livia as the Augusta and her grandsons Germanicus and Drusus Julius Tib. f. as the Caesars. First, Livia was Augusta during the years that they were Caesars (A.D. 14–19). Second, they both held imperium in these years (Tac. *Ann.* I, 14 and 24), if, indeed, that is the meaning of *σκήπτουσι*. They both had been voted ovations for diplomatic successes (Tac. *Ann.* II, 64) which is perhaps the meaning of *εἰρήνης φάη*. They were often paired (Tac. *Ann.* II, 43; IV, 4) and frequently served as honorary *duumviri*,<sup>22</sup> and formed as well a consistent pair on the inscriptions and coins of the period.<sup>23</sup> Finally, there seems to have existed a common cult of Livia as Julia Augusta with Germanicus and Drusus in Spain.<sup>24</sup> Livia's saving the world, then, may well refer to her role in Augustus' final settlement of the succession problem in A.D. 4, at which time the Julian and Claudian families were united.<sup>25</sup>

In general, and recognizing that certainty on this question is impossible, it is highly unlikely that the Augusta in this epigram is Antonia Minor. Probably it is Livia, but Julia cannot be ruled out. One should in any case reject Cichorius' interpretation that Honestus was celebrating Antonia's role in the fall of Sejanus.<sup>26</sup>

The chapters from Josephus, though more specific, are no more satisfactory, for, as will be shown, both Josephus' sources and his own inclinations would have led him to exaggerate Antonia's role.

The sources of Josephus' *AJ*, especially for Roman history, have long

<sup>21</sup> Drusus, it may be objected, was and remained a Claudius throughout his life. A reference to him as a "Caesar" is highly improbable.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., in Spain. See A. Vives y Escudero, *La Moneda Hispanica* iv, Madrid, 1936, for many references.

<sup>23</sup> For the inscriptions, IGRR iii, 680, and iv, 1549: EJ 92, 94a and b; for the coins, Vives, *op.cit.* and *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum*, for Phrygia, 246; Lydia, 251; Caria, 167 and Central Greece, 65.

<sup>24</sup> A. Garcia y Bellido, *Los Retratos de Livia, Drusus Minor y Germanicus de Medina Sidonia, Mélanges Piganiol*, Paris, 1966, 481.

<sup>25</sup> On this subject, see B.M. Levick, Drusus Caesar and the Adoptions of A.D. 4, *Latomus* 25 (1966) 227.

<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, and despite the criticisms of Peek and Robert, Cichorius' authority has remained unchallenged in English speaking research, see, for example, Seager, 216 and G.W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, Oxford, 1965, 141 n. 2.

been the subject of speculation.<sup>27</sup> Josephus, as is unfortunately his habit, does not give any indication of his sources. Mommsen has argued on the basis of one anecdote (*AJ* xix, 91/2) that Cluvius Rufus was the source of all portions of the *AJ* and *BJ* dealing with Roman history.<sup>28</sup> This theory has, until recently, won general acceptance.<sup>29</sup> Feldman, however, has presented a good case for supplemental oral sources dealing especially with the problems of *AJ* xix. Among the probable sources is the Jewish king Agrippa I (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> I 131), whose son, Agrippa II (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> I 132), as a friend and patron of Josephus, provided him with a considerable body of historical material (*Vita* 366).<sup>30</sup>

That the section here under discussion could well stem from the family tradition of the Agrippae is substantiated by the fact that Book xviii of the *AJ* centers around the figure of Agrippa I and his romanticized adventures at the courts of Tiberius and Gaius. Throughout Book xviii Antonia, as the friend of Agrippa's mother Berenice (*AJ* xviii, 143, 156, 165), is presented as Agrippa's saving angel (*id.* and 179f., 183f., 202f., 236f.). These statements lead Feldman to conclude that Josephus gave special notice to Antonia and her family as part of a "... general exaltation of Agrippa, (and) his friend Antonia ..."<sup>31</sup> And, indeed, the story of Antonia and Sejanus appears only within the context of Agrippa's adventures.

If then Agrippa I is the probable source of these chapters, how reliable is he as a witness? As he was in Palestine from A.D. 23 until about 36,<sup>32</sup> he could not have passed on an eye witness account of what had happened. His version of the story was formed, most probably, from what he learned from his Roman acquaintances after his return to Rome.

Some confirmation for this suggestion may be found in the prominence of Pallas (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 858) in the story. First, the fact that Pallas, then an unknown slave of Antonia, is mentioned at all, points to a source dating to the reign of Claudius. Second, Pallas' brother Antonius Felix (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 828) was later the procurator of Judaea and married Drusilla (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> D 195), the daughter of Agrippa I and the sister of Agrippa II. Though it is doubtful

<sup>27</sup> Most recently by L. H. Feldman, *The Sources of Josephus' Antiquities*, Book 19, *Latomus* 21 (1962) 321; cf. D. Timpe, *Römische Geschichte bei Flavius Josephus, Historia* 9 (1960) 474. Feldman, 320, n. 3, gives a complete bibliography of the question.

<sup>28</sup> Th. Mommsen, Cornelius Tacitus and Cluvius Rufus, *Gesammelte Schriften* vii, Berlin, 1909, 248.

<sup>29</sup> See Feldman, 320, n. 3, for the references. An exception not noted by Feldman is H. Block, *Die Quellen des Flavius Josephus*, Leipzig, 1879, 154, where he argues that everything about Agrippa I comes from his son Agrippa II.

<sup>30</sup> Feldman, 332. Timpe is of less value for this question as his analysis is restricted to the particular problems of *AJ* xix. He does, however, admit the existence of a Jewish source, 501/2.

<sup>31</sup> L. H. Feldman, *Josephus IX* (Loeb) 129, n. 'D'.

<sup>32</sup> Josephus *AJ* xviii, 147 and 161. For a detailed chronology see A. H. M. Jones, *The Herodes of Judaea*, Oxford, 1938, 185f.

that he would have brought this story into the family tradition of the Agrippae he may have been responsible for the detail concerning Pallas. Whatever the case, this tradition would seem to have become established during the reign of Claudius and definitely before Pallas' fall from power in the early years of Nero's reign (*Tac. Ann.* XIII, 14 and XIV, 65).

If the arguments about the Claudian context of Josephus' account of Sejanus' fall have any validity, one other inconsistency may be explained. Josephus is the only source who states that the "conspiracy" was directed against Tiberius himself. Both Suetonius (*Tib.* 61) and Tacitus (*Ann.* VI, 3.4) make it quite clear that the "conspiracy" centered around the figure of Gaius. The reason for this transfer becomes clear when one considers that, at the time the Agrippan version of the story was formed (i.e. soon after the events of January 41),<sup>33</sup> it may have been considered impolitic to refer to the new emperor's mother saving the tyrant Gaius. Using this version, and understandably inclined to favor his friend and patron Agrippa II, it does not seem likely that Josephus would have strained his critical faculties to determine the truth of what is, after all, only an ancillary anecdote.

In summary, Josephus adopted a story that was compatible with the wishes of his patron Agrippa II. The ultimate source of his version would seem to have been Agrippa I, but as he was not in Rome at the time of Sejanus' fall he could not have passed on a first-hand account of the event. This version of the fall of Sejanus, despite its appearing within the context of Agrippa's highly romantic and exaggerated adventures at the court of Tiberius and Gaius, is datable, because of its emphasis on Pallas, to the reign of Claudius. Consistent with the semi-official history of the Claudian Era and Agrippa's devotion to Antonia, the version that became established in the family tradition of the Agrippae de-emphasized the threat to Gaius and exaggerated the importance of Antonia and Pallas.

There is then every reason why Josephus' sources and his own inclinations would have led him to stress the importance of Antonia in the events of 31. In this sense, the story is remarkably similar to another well known case of exaggeration by Josephus: his account of Agrippa's role in the accession of Claudius as reported in *AJ* xix, 236f.<sup>34</sup>

Dio's account of Antonia's role in the fall of Sejanus is curious because it occurs not in the full account of the discovery and suppression of the "conspiracy" in Book 58, but rather in the Flavian Book 66. It is still more curious because, although Antonia is mentioned in Book 58, it is only in relation to the punishment of her daughter Livilla for "complicity" (58, 11.7). The central figure of this passage is not Antonia Minor but her freed-woman Caenis.

<sup>33</sup> On the assassination of Gaius see J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *The Emperor Gaius*, Oxford, 1934, 101f.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *BJ* ii, 206. See also V. Scramuzza, *The Emperor Claudius*, London, 1940, 58-9.

The presence of Caenis points to the clear connection between Vespasian and Antonia. Vespasian's mistress in his youth and again later as he was emperor was this Caenis, the trusted secretary of Antonia (Suet. *Vesp.* 3; Dio 66, 14).<sup>35</sup> He was sponsored in his career by L. Vitellius (Tac. *Hist.* iii, 66), the powerful minister and friend of Claudius, who claimed a long friendship with Antonia (Tac. *Ann.* xi, 3). Another supporter of Vespasian was Narcissus (Suet. *Vesp.* 4), the freedman of Claudius, who may have begun his career in the joint household of Claudius and Antonia.<sup>36</sup> Given this strong Flavian background, it may be worthwhile to investigate Dio's sources for this story.<sup>37</sup>

An analysis of the lost contemporary histories of the reign of Tiberius is hopeless.<sup>38</sup> The works of Servilius Nonianus, Aufidius Bassus and the autobiographies of Tiberius and Agrippina the Younger all remain shadowy documents. Nevertheless, it is hard to see how any one of them would have devoted much space to the tale of the prodigious memory of the still unknown and young freedwoman of Antonia. Seneca the Elder might be a more likely source; his history seems to have come down to about 37 and his own excellent memory may have given him an interest in similar capacities in others.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the definite Flavian context in which this story is told seems to speak against the proposition that Dio found the story in a Julio-Claudian source.

If a Flavian source for this tale seems more likely, its identification is no more certain. Pliny the Elder shows a great interest in such tales but his history does not seem to have covered either the reign of Tiberius or very much of Vespasian's.<sup>40</sup> Licinius Mucianus composed a book on natural wonders in which the mnemonic achievements of Caenis would not have been out of place. Nevertheless, too little is known about this work to venture any suggestions.<sup>41</sup>

Plutarch, on the other hand, would seem a more likely source. He had traveled extensively in Italy during the Flavian Era and was no doubt familiar with the gossip concerning the emperors and their immediate

<sup>35</sup> See also *CIL* vi, 12037, DIS. MANIB/ANTONIAE.AVG/L.CAENIDIS/OPTVMAE. PATRON.

<sup>36</sup> It is often forgotten that, after the adoption of Germanicus by Tiberius, Claudius became *paterfamilias* of the Claudii Neronēs, including Antonia under his authority.

<sup>37</sup> F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio*, Oxford, 1964, 34, says "*Quellenforschung* makes up the vast majority of literature on Dio, but it has hardly led to satisfactory results." For one such attempt, see G. Townend, *Traces in Dio Cassius of Cluvius, Aufidius and Pliny*, *Hermes* 89 (1961) 227.

<sup>38</sup> Syme, 274–278. <sup>39</sup> Seneca, *de vita patris*, quoted and discussed by Syme, 277.

<sup>40</sup> The terminal dates of *ab fine Aufidii Bassi* are still unclear. See Syme, 179–80 and Townend, 232–3.

<sup>41</sup> For the fragments, see H. Peter *HRR* ii, Stuttgart, 1967, 101f. (reprint of 1906 edition). See also Kappelmacher, *RE* xiii, 441, 'Licinius' 116a.

families.<sup>42</sup> Such a story might well have been recorded in one of his lost essays.<sup>43</sup> Tacitus is also a possible source. It would not be unusual for him to have given a summary of Caenis' career on mentioning her death in a lost portion of the *Historiae*. The details of the necrology, however, and especially Caenis' reply to Antonia, are not compatible with the usual Tacitean solemnity and brevity on such occasions.<sup>44</sup> In the end certainty is impossible and further speculation meaningless.

We may conclude that such a story would never have been recorded if Caenis had not later become such an important figure at Vespasian's court. Most likely this tale of one of the few truly colorful characters of the Flavian Era developed in that Era, being recorded perhaps by Plutarch.

In general, then, there is no reliable evidence that Antonia played a significant role in the fall of Sejanus.

### III. A Reconstruction

On the basis of the conclusions reached above, it might be worthwhile to consider how the tradition concerning Antonia and Sejanus developed.

The official version of Sejanus' fall is given by Suetonius in his *Vita Tiberii*. There Suetonius, quoting from Tiberius' autobiography, states that Tiberius claimed to have destroyed Sejanus "... *quod comperisset furere adversus liberos Germanici filii sui*" (61). This version is supported by Tacitus who mentions that Sextius Paconianus was the "... *delectus ab Seiano cuius ope dolus Gaii Caesari pararetur*" (*Ann.* VI, 3). Whether Tiberius mentioned Antonia as the source (or one of the sources) which informed him of Sejanus' plans cannot be determined. But, on the basis of Suetonius' statement, it would seem unlikely that Tiberius mentioned anyone in particular.

In line with this official version it is probable that the *Acta Senatus* made some mention of Antonia in connection with Sejanus' fall. Following the condemnation and death of Sejanus the Senate would probably have officially thanked Tiberius and Antonia for saving Gaius and his siblings. A similar thanksgiving had been voted eleven years before when, following Cn. Piso's condemnation, Tiberius, Livia, Antonia, Agrippina, Drusus Tib. f. and Claudius were thanked "... *ob vindictam Germanici*" (Tac. *Ann.* III, 18). In 31, Livia and Drusus were dead and Agrippina was in prison. Claudius, who had been consistently denied public honors by Tiberius (Suet. *Cl.* 5) and who had only been added to the Resolution of 20 as an afterthought,

<sup>42</sup> C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, Oxford, 1971, 20f.

<sup>43</sup> The traditional list of Plutarch's writings, "the catalogue of Lamprias" is given in full by Ziegler, *RE* xxi, 697. About one-third of the titles are lost, including a "Life of Tiberius," catalogue number 27.

<sup>44</sup> A good example of the Tacitean necrology is that for Livia, *Ann.* V, 1.

may not even have been included in this one. It is a reasonable assumption that official thanks would have been voted to Antonia, the guardian of Gaius and his sisters in 31 (Suet. *Gaius* 10), whether or not she had played any role in the exposure of the "plot."

The accession of Gaius brought Antonia into prominence. She was given all the honors voted previously to Livia including the title of Augusta (Suet. *Gaius* 15.2). It should be noted that, though Suetonius gives no particular reason for these honors, people might have begun to associate her with the saving of Gaius. Most likely, however, Antonia was honored as part of the general celebration of Gaius' family.<sup>45</sup>

Interest in Antonia no doubt increased under Claudius, who, to the honors voted for his mother, issued also a series of coins.<sup>46</sup> The story would, of course, have varied: a reference to Antonia saving Gaius would not have been acceptable in the days following his assassination. At this point the tradition divided. Agrippa I returned to Judaea with one variation closely linked to his own adventures and flattering to Claudius, to his mother Antonia, and to his powerful freedman Pallas. This version became part of the family tradition of the Agrippae and eventually passed into the *AJ* of Josephus. The other variation of the tradition is more difficult to trace but it certainly solidified in the Flavian Era, no doubt promoted by Antonia's former secretary and Vespasian's mistress, Caenis. This tradition, stressing Caenis instead of Pallas, passed eventually into Dio's history.

### Conclusions

There is no evidence to support the theory that Antonia and Sejanus were in any way allied before the events of 31.

The sources which stress Antonia's importance in the fall of Sejanus are most probably based on inventions of the Claudian and Flavian periods.

In reference to the more general question of Sejanus' conspiracy it has here been suggested that Josephus' allegation that Sejanus was plotting against Tiberius reflects the semi-official history of the Claudian principate, which, in the aftermath of Gaius' assassination, de-emphasized the threat to Gaius in 31. This tradition, developing at the time that it did, preferred to see Sejanus' conspiracy directed against Tiberius rather than against the dead tyrant Gaius.

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<sup>45</sup> The phenomenon is most plainly seen on Gaius' bronze coinage, see *BMCRE* I, 151f.

<sup>46</sup> *BMCRE* I Claudius, Nrs. 109 (aureus) and 166 (dupondius).