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THE WIFE OF SEJANUS

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The Fasti Ostienses demonstrate that a connection of Sejanus, almost certainly his wife, committed suicide eight days after Sejanus himself had been executed in October A.D. 31. The name of this person has been lost, but editors have restored “Apicata”, the ex-wife of Sejanus, who reputedly took her own life fairly soon after the death of Sejanus. Consider the layout of the section of the Fasti which deals with this matter:¹

XV.K.NOV.SEIANVS.S[(edge of stone)
VIII.K.NOV.STRAB.[
F.STRANG.VII.K.NO[
SEIANI.SE.OCCID[
DEC.CA[pi]TO.AELI[
IUNILLA.SEIANI[
IACVERVNT	

Apicata

There are problems with restoring “Apicata” in line 3 (above). First, on a simply mechanical level, the name “Apicata” would seem to be too long to fit on the stone, particularly since it would have to be .APICATA.² A shorter name or one with more i’s would be more appropriate for the gap. Secondly, Sejanus is said by Tacitus *Annals* 4.3.5 to have divorced Apicata in A.D. 23 (pellit domo Seianus uxorem Apicatam, ex qua tres liberos genuerat . . .);³ that is, in 31, eight years after the divorce, Apicata was technically no longer Sejanus’ wife.⁴

Dio 58.11.6 gives further details which suggest that Apicata, the wife spurned by Sejanus eight years before his death, is an unlikely candidate for inclusion on the Ostian inscription.

¹ For the Fasti Ostienses, see A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Italiae* (Rome, 1947) vol. 13.1. The accepted restoration is: XV K. Nov. Seianus s[trang.]/VIII K. Nov. Strabo [Seiani]/f. strang. VII K. No[v. Apicata] /Seiani se occidi[t . . .]/Dec. Capito Aelia[nus et]/Iunilla Seiani f. [in Gem.]/iacuerunt. Cf. L. Vidman, *Fasti Ostienses* (Prague, ²1982) 42. See G. V. Sumner, “The Family Connections of L. Aelius Sejanus”, *Phoenix* 19 (1965) 139–41.

² The stone would not have chosen with any notion of having to accommodate Apicata’s name, rather her name, if inscribed, would have been squeezed into the available space, but surely the whole line would have been inscribed in a less spaced-out fashion?

³ On the breakdown of the marriage and its cause, see also Dio 58.11.6.

⁴ It should be noted that both Tacitus and Dio continued to use terminology to denote that Apicata was still the “wife” of Sejanus even after the chronological time of the divorce (See *Ann.* 4.11; Dio 58.11.6). Sejanus, however, at the time of his death was, at the very least, engaged to someone else, so the relationship between Sejanus and Apicata should have lapsed. Note, on the other hand, that Dio 58.11.6 calls Livia (Livilla) the wife of Drusus in 31, although Drusus has been dead for eight years.

From a judicial point of view, there is no reason for Apicata to have been inscribed on the Fasti, even if she had still been Sejanus' wife in 31, since Dio stresses that no official action was taken against her.⁵ If her name had been recorded on the Fasti, it would have ranked her suicide on a par with a group of individuals who had suffered official condemnation for treason (Tacitus *Annals* 5.9; Dio 58.11.4–6). More importantly, Dio states clearly that Apicata killed herself after and because she saw her two younger children exposed on the Gemonian Stair.⁶ The Fasti, on the other hand, indicate that, whoever committed suicide, this person certainly did so before the younger children of Sejanus suffered punishment.

Sponsa

There is strong evidence in the literary sources that Sejanus was engaged or perhaps even married to one of the members of the imperial family at the time of his death. Tacitus *Annals* 5.6.2 has one of his characters claim that Sejanus in A.D. 31 had been the colleague and *gener* of Tiberius (*versa est fortuna et ille quidem qui collegam et generum adsciverat sibi ignoscit . . .*). A second time, in a speech attributed to M. Terentius, Tacitus *Annals* 6.8.3 more precisely calls Sejanus a member of the imperial house, a relation of Tiberius (*gener*) and the consular colleague of the emperor (*non enim Seianum Vulsiniensem set Claudiae et Iuliae domus partem, quas adfinitate occupaverat, tuum, Caesar, generum, tui consulatus socium, tua officia in re publica capessentem colebamus.*)⁷

This dual concept of Sejanus being the colleague and *adfinis* of Tiberius receives confirmation from Zonarus (Dio 58.3.9), who notes that Tiberius killed Sejanus, ἐπὶ μέγα δόξης ἐπάρας καὶ κηδεστήν ἐπὶ Ἰουλίᾳ τῇ τοῦ Δρούσου θυγατρὶ ποιησάμενος . . . These accounts stress the high political position of Sejanus and the fact that Tiberius and Sejanus were connected by a marriage-alliance.⁸ Similarly, Suetonius *Tiberius* 65.1 points out that Tiberius led Sejanus along, first, by holding a consulship with him (January to May 31), then *spe affinitatis ac tribuniciae potestatis*.⁹ Although Suetonius talks only about the “hope of an alliance”, if his statement is taken in concert with the other evidence, it would seem that Sejanus was certainly engaged to some imperial figure.

Who was Sejanus' betrothed? It is stated categorically by Zonarus that Sejanus was affianced to Julia, the daughter of Drusus (Dio 58.3.9). In terms of her availability, Julia seems eminently suitable. In A.D. 20, she had been engaged to Nero, the son of Germani-

⁵ Unless Apicata, since she had known of the murder of Drusus, the son of Tiberius, without having informed anyone of the murder until eight years later, could have been considered an “accessory after the fact”. The text of Dio, however, would seem to exclude this possibility.

⁶ The extant sections of Tacitus' *Annals* do not record how and when Apicata died.

⁷ On the speech of Terentius, see also Dio 58.19.1, 3–5.

⁸ Modern commentators on the *Annals* have pointed out that, although the terms *gener* and κηδεστής may mean son-in-law, in this instance they may intend no more than that Sejanus was engaged to one of the imperial women (H. Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus* (Oxford, 1896) ad 5.5; E. Koestermann, *Annalen* (Heidelberg, 1965) ad locc.). In addition, on *gener* as a *sponsus*, Justinian *Dig.* 22.5.5 pr.1.

⁹ On the tribunician power as a ruse, see also Dio 58.9.2, 4, 10.3.

cus,¹⁰ and later married, but, presumably at the time when Tiberius made allegations of immorality against Nero in 29 (Tacitus *Annals* 5.3.2–3), the marriage was dissolved. Julia would have been free to re-marry a year or so after the divorce. It was at about this same time, around A.D. 30, that Tiberius decided to promote Sejanus to the consulship (cf. Xiphilinus [Dio] 58.4.3) and to smooth his path by linking him to the imperial house.¹¹ According to Dio 58.7.5, after Sejanus had resigned his consulship, he asked permission of Tiberius to visit his μελλόνυμφος in Campania. The evidence suggests that Sejanus was betrothed to Julia some time in A.D. 30 and was still engaged to her after he resigned his consulship in May 31.

Yet the statement that Julia was the intended of Sejanus has not been universally accepted, and it has been suggested that Livia, Julia's mother, was the woman actually engaged to Sejanus.¹² This argument has gained attention because of the allegation that Sejanus had long been the paramour of Livia, even while her husband Drusus had been alive.¹³ In the only clear statement we have on this issue, however, from supposed letters passing to and fro from Sejanus to Tiberius in A.D. 25, Tacitus would have us believe that Tiberius had effectively denied an alliance to the pair.¹⁴ Although the political situation, put forward as the ostensible reason for Tiberius not accepting a marriage between Sejanus and Livia in 25, had altered markedly by A.D. 30, we cannot be sure that, if Tiberius had in fact spoken against the alliance in 25, his feelings would have changed sufficiently to allow a marriage between Sejanus and the sister of Germanicus, the widow of his beloved son.¹⁵ The case for an engagement between Sejanus and Livia seems unlikely, given the precise statement of Zonarus.¹⁶

Although Sejanus may have been engaged to Julia, there is no evidence that he actually married this woman, and since the *Fasti Ostienses* indicate that Sejanus' wife committed

¹⁰ B. Levick, *Tiberius the Politician* (London, 1976) 157–158.

¹¹ At the time when Velleius Paterculus penned his portrait of Sejanus (2.127–8), around the time of the consulship of M. Vinicius in A.D. 30, it is clear that Sejanus had been designated neither as consul for 31 nor was a *gener* of Tiberius, or this would have elicited some comment from Velleius. See A. J. Woodman, *Velleius Paterculus: The Tiberian Narrative* (2.94–131) (Cambridge, 1977) 262.

¹² B. Levick, *Tiberius the Politician* (London, 1976) 170.

¹³ Tacitus *Annals* 4.3, 8, 11–2, 39–41; Dio 57.22.1–4b. Since both Tacitus and Dio accept that Sejanus and Livia murdered Drusus in A.D. 23, they assume that their affair predates the murder. On the shaping of these events by Tacitus, see P. Sinclair, “Tacitus’ presentation of Livia Julia”, *AJPh* 111 (1990) 238–56.

¹⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 4.39–41. On this proposal, see P. Sinclair, “Tacitus’ presentation of Livia Julia”, *AJPh* 111 (1990) 250–253; D. C. A. Shotter, *Tacitus Annals IV* (Warminster, 1989) 24; on the veracity of the letters, see R. H. Martin and A. J. Woodman, *Tacitus Annals Book IV* (Cambridge, 1989) 193–194 and ad locc. The use of a literary device, in this case a series of letters, does not necessarily mean that the “factual” import of the letters was fictional.

¹⁵ Tiberius may have suspected that if Sejanus were to marry Livia, Sejanus would, by this link, eclipse the sons of Germanicus altogether. We should note that Tiberius, even when seeming to point to Sejanus as his successor, made no move to adopt him, perhaps because this would have meant including Sejanus' sons in his succession plans. Tiberius clearly wanted Gaius, and failing him Gemellus, to become princeps.

¹⁶ Zonarus, the source of the name of Sejanus' betrothed, is unlikely have become confused between Livia and her daughter. In [Dio] 57.22.4b, Zonarus very clearly notes the plans of Sejanus to marry Livia, then shortly after this specifies that Sejanus was actually engaged to Julia [Dio] 58.3.9.

suicide in October 31, Julia cannot have been this wife, because she lived on into the reign of Claudius. It is possible that Sejanus was indeed engaged to Julia, but that he then married another.

Uxor

There is some indirect evidence in the sources to support the idea that Sejanus did marry into the imperial family. We should note, first, the wording used by Tacitus *Annals* 6.8.5–11 to describe Sejanus' entry into the imperial house:

cunctos qui novissimi consilii expertes fuimus meo unius discrimine defendam. non enim Seianum Vulsiniensem set Claudiae et Iuliae domus partem, quas adfinitate occupaverat, tuum, Caesar, generum, tui consulatus socium, tua officia in re publica capessentem colebamus . . . insidiae in rem publicam, consilia caedis adversum imperatorem puniantur . . .

The comment put in the mouth of Terentius, that Sejanus was “*domus partem*” of the imperial family in A.D. 31 and “*occupaverat*” the houses of the Julii and the Claudii by means of marriage-alliance, hints that one of the “treasonous” activities of Sejanus, as far as the imperial family was concerned, was an alliance somehow forced upon it.¹⁷ Zonarus goes further in suggesting that marriage to Livia, the mother of Julia, formed part of the seditious undertaking put in train by Sejanus (Dio 57.22.4b):¹⁸

ὁ Σεϊανὸς . . . τῇ τε Λιβίᾳ συνοικήσειν τῇ τοῦ Δρούσου γυναικί, ἣς ἦρα, καὶ τὸ κράτος ἔξειν μηδενὸς τῷ Τιβερίῳ διαδόχου τυγχάνοντος . . .

There are further, but more subtle indications that Tacitus, in Book Four of the *Annals*, has also prefigured a marriage between Sejanus and Livia. Although seeming to present material in a strictly annalistic way, when Tacitus portrays the personality and actions of Sejanus, he inserts facts and motives which occasionally jar with the surrounding narrative. In fact, Tacitus appears to interpret the power and position of Sejanus only ever in terms of the historical circumstances of A.D. 31. Associated with some of this discernibly anachronistic material are allusions to the prominence that the relationship between Sejanus and Livia was to play.

Tacitus has clearly projected into the opening of his account of the year A.D. 23 a picture of Sejanus as he appeared towards the end of his life. It is implausible, for example, that Tiberius, in 23, could have called Sejanus his *socius laborum* (4.2.4), when in fact this posi-

¹⁷ Terentius also makes reference to other treasonous activities. By the time that Terentius came to make his speech, late in 31, many of the other seditious activities of Sejanus had come to light and thus are included in this speech, but the first “crime” could have been the marriage that was to pave the way for Sejanus' larger attempt at removing the emperor. On the expedient parts of the speech, see R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958) 406.

¹⁸ Zonarus seems to be giving, not so much the plans of Sejanus, as a summary of events over a fairly long period in this section, since it can only have been after the exposure of the affair between Sejanus and Livia that Tiberius could have suspected the paternity of Tiberius Gemellus (cf. Suet. *Tib.* 62.3). The compression of events has led Zonarus into inconsistency. Tiberius would not have considered Sejanus as a successor if he had believed that Gemellus was in fact Sejanus' bastard-son.

tion was at the time being filled by Drusus and had been occupied by him for at least two years, and in Dio 58.4.3, this appellation given by Tiberius to Sejanus is more sensibly associated with their joint consulship of 31.¹⁹ In addition, the further honours allowed to Sejanus by Tacitus, statues in the theatres, in the fora and with the legions, also relate to a period later than 23, after Sejanus had become the probable successor to Tiberius.²⁰

Similarly, the comments put in the mouth of Drusus in this same year of 23, concerning the alleged pre-eminence of Sejanus, suit better the context of 30/1 (*Annals* 4.7.2–4). Tacitus himself has suggested the fictional aspect of Drusus' inferior position by relegating this impression to the young man's alleged complaints about Sejanus, and by using his complaints solely for a larger literary purpose. Drusus' utterances are said to have been the spur to Sejanus to bring his plans to maturation, so that the unsuspecting and vulnerable Drusus, by his thoughtless comments about Sejanus, is made ironically to hurry on his own murder.

Other aspects of Drusus' speech are inappropriate for A.D. 23. Drusus refers ostensibly to an alliance between Sejanus' daughter and Claudius' son, a prospective union which lasted only a few days and which surely cannot have existed just at the historical moment of the speech,²¹ but the intent of Tacitus at this point is surely to stress the ignominy of any such alliance. This suggests a forward allusion to the later marriage-plans of Sejanus, which would also be deemed ignominious. The literary function of Drusus' speech is again made clear, since, juxtaposed with Drusus' worries about Sejanus having ideas above his marital station, is the revelation that all Drusus' comments were being conveyed by his wife Livia to her lover Sejanus. Tacitus' purpose here is to convey the pathos and irony of the situation of the husband being so easily deceived by his wife.²² Tacitus is not necessarily claiming to have knowledge of the intimate conversations of Livia and her bed-companions.

Tacitus further underlines the chronological artifice of the entire episode by recording that the mechanics of Drusus' death were revealed only eight years later (*Annals* 4.8.1). He is admitting to his reader that the precise details of the events of 23 were unknown, since the evidence came from suspect sources, confessions extracted by torture many years later. Drusus' speech seems to have been introduced, not only for an immediate literary purpose,

¹⁹ Velleius calls Sejanus the *adiutor* of Tiberius ca A.D. 30 (2.127.3). Although Xiphilinus [Dio] 57.19.7 calls Sejanus the σύμβουλος and ὑπηρετής of Tiberius prior to 31, the material of this whole section about Sejanus has no real chronological basis and seems to come from a general synopsis of Sejanus' life (Dio 57.19.5–7).

²⁰ The only statue known of Sejanus in 23 was that in the theatre of Pompey, permitted to him by Tiberius in A.D. 22 (Tac. *Ann.* 3.72; Dio 57.21.3, where other statues are private statues. Cf. 58.4.4, 7.1–2 – public statues from a later period.) The date for statues with the legions is uncertain, but hardly likely before the demise of Drusus (Suet. *Tib.* 48.2), and statues were possibly only raised to Sejanus officially after his formal marriage-alliance to the imperial family in A.D. 30. See D. C. A. Shotter, *Tacitus Annals IV* (Warminster, 1989) ad 4.2.4.

²¹ The alliance is dated to A.D. 21 by Tacitus *Annals* 3.29.5, and Suetonius *Claudius* 37.1 relates that it lasted only a few days; but cf. D. C. A. Shotter, *Tacitus Annals IV* (Warminster, 1989) ad 4.7.3.

²² A similar tack by Tacitus has been observed in the irony associated with Drusus' comments upon his marriage in A.D. 21. See P. Sinclair, "Tacitus' presentation of Livia Julia", *AJPh* 111 (1990) 244–245.

but specifically to insinuate the unholy ambition of Sejanus, whose plans included marrying into the imperial house to gain power.

The topic of marriage between Sejanus and Livia is twice referred to explicitly in Book Four of the *Annals*. Tacitus has included marriage as one of the inducements supposedly offered by Sejanus to Livia in A.D. 23 to tempt her to get rid of her husband (4.3.3: . . . ad coniugii spem, consortium regni et necem mariti impulit. Cf. 4.39.1: . . . promissum matrimonium flagitante Livia . . .). Since Tacitus implies that these comments comprised the “bed-room” conversation of the adulterous pair, he must simply have guessed the general terms of Sejanus’ promises from consideration of the later behaviour of Sejanus and Livia. This suggests that the marriage loomed large in consideration of the events of A.D. 31.

A second time in Book Four, Tacitus brings up the marriage, although this reference also serves as a literary device to increase the tension of his account (*Annals* 4.39–40). On this occasion in 25, Sejanus is depicted putting his position at risk by attempting to win consent from Tiberius to wed Livia, and thus apparently showing his hand to the emperor far too soon. As with the speech of Drusus concerning the forward-looking criticisms about Sejanus, so Tacitus seems to have used the device of letters to prefigure what Sejanus actually implemented in 31.²³

The content of the letters, as with the earlier speech, underlines the unworthiness of Sejanus and indicates the opposition Tiberius is said to have felt towards the suggested alliance between Sejanus and Livia. The letters, on some points, are manifestly setting the scene for what was to follow: for example, the emperor hints that the exalted ambition of Sejanus is not a good thing (*Annals* 4.40.4–7), and so it turned out! Similarly, Tiberius is said to have written that he would be certain to engineer circumstances to determine Sejanus’ fate, and so Tacitus ominously alludes to the infamous downfall of Sejanus in 31 (*Annals* 2.40.11–2).²⁴ Within this same context of implying what was to come, Tacitus also has Tiberius write that Sejanus would be foolish to believe that Livia would ever be content to grow old with a mere *eques* as her husband. This can only be a Tacitean hint of Sejanus’ spectacular rise to a position far above that of an *eques* and to underline the role Livia would assume (*Annals* 4.40.4–5). Tacitus has clearly included the letters, among other reasons, to indicate the prominence that the topic of Sejanus’ marriage to Livia would play in his downfall.²⁵

In addition to the explicit and implicit references to the marriage, there is also circumstantial evidence to substantiate the proposal that Sejanus and Livia were believed to have been working together to gain power and had perhaps married to bring their plans to fruition. It is difficult to believe, for example, that Tiberius would have entertained allegations of

²³ That the letters themselves are fictional seems obvious, since Sejanus, within a few years, had in fact achieved much that Tiberius was tacitly denying to him in the letters. The letters may have been introduced not only to prefigure later sentiments but also to form a counterpoint to the demand for marriage made by Agrippina in A.D. 26 (vouched for by the Younger Agrippina, cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4.53.1–3).

²⁴ P. Sinclair, “Tacitus’ presentation of Livia Julia”, *AJPh* 111 (1990) 250–253.

²⁵ The fateful aspect of the marriage is also hinted at further in *Annals* 4.40.1 (non iam de matrimonio, sed altius metuens . . .).

the involvement of Livia, his niece and daughter-in-law, in the murder of his son Drusus, whose death some eight years previously had aroused absolutely no suspicions,²⁶ unless some overt and undeniable connection had already been made between Livia and Sejanus.

It was Apicata, the wife divorced by Sejanus in 23, who is said to have sent, late in A.D. 31, well after the death of Sejanus, a report about the murder of Drusus to Tiberius, which denounced Livia as Drusus' murderess (Dio 58.11.6; cf. Tacitus *Annals* 4.11.3–4). The emperor would have been fully aware that the intelligence he had received concerning the alleged murder of Drusus was unreliable, since Apicata was necessarily a biased and second-hand source of information, and his only other sources of information were confessions extracted under torture from Livia's physician Eudemus and the eunuch Lygduus.²⁷ A charge of murder against the then-disgraced Sejanus would have been relatively easy for Tiberius to accept, but Livia had surely done nothing previously to make her uncle suspicious.

The behaviour of Sejanus and Livia must have indicated to the emperor that these two might have acted together against Drusus, and the fact of a marriage celebrated by the two would have been undeniable proof of their attachment and insidious ambition. Tiberius is said to have reviewed in great depth the evidence surrounding the death of his son (Suetonius *Tiberius*. 62.1), and it would seem, according to the unanimous opinion of the sources, that Tiberius came to believe that Sejanus and Livia had murdered his son.²⁸ On the basis that Tiberius gave the allegations serious consideration, it would seem that Tiberius had had sufficient reason to doubt Livia, and it would also indicate that the exposure of any liaison between Sejanus and Livia preceded the allegations of murder.

There is also the unusual feature of the downfall of Sejanus, that it was Antonia, Livia's mother, who had early cognizance of the conspiracy against Tiberius (Josephus *Antiquitates* 18.181–2; Dio 65.14.1). As the "mother of the bride", she may have discovered the marriage and felt it her duty to convey this news to Tiberius,²⁹ and she was perhaps the only person

²⁶ In one extract from Dio, Xiphilinus claims that Sejanus and Livia together poisoned Drusus (Dio 57.22.1–2). He also claims that Tiberius put to death, at the time, those involved in Drusus' death, and he put others to death later (Dio 57.22.4). This account implies that Tiberius knew in A.D. 23 that Drusus had been poisoned, but Zonarus goes on to explain that those who died numbered Agrippina and her sons (Dio 57.22.4a), so his condensation of the material has led to some chronological inaccuracies.

²⁷ B. Levick, *Tiberius the Politician* (London, 1976) 161–162, gives the story of Apicata no credence. See also R. Seager, *Tiberius* (London, 1972) 184–185.

²⁸ Although Tiberius would have had a deep interest in discovering the truth about the death of his son, he may actually have been more concerned to validate the paternity of his grandchildren. If Sejanus and Livia had killed Drusus, then their long-term affair was demonstrable. The sources questioned the paternity of Tiberius Gemellus (Suet. *Tib.* 62.3; Dio 57.22.4b; cf. Jos. *AJ* 18.211 ff.), but Tiberius left Gemellus joint heir with Gaius to his estate (Suet. *Gaius* 14.1), suggesting that he put little credence in such allegations.

²⁹ This would answer the objections that Hennig seems to have in accepting the assertion of Josephus that Antonia was involved (D. Hennig, *L. Aelius Seianus* [München, 1975] 148–149.) See also R. Seager, *Tiberius* (London, 1972) 216, n. 4.

strong enough and close enough to Tiberius to be able to reveal to him what her daughter and Sejanus had done behind his back.³⁰

Nuptials between Sejanus and Livia, however, had not formed part of the publicly-acknowledged plans of Tiberius, since he had intended Julia, not Livia to marry Sejanus (cf. Tacitus *Annals* 4.39.1–41.1).³¹ It could well have been the unwanted marriage, revealed by Antonia, that impelled Tiberius to proceed more directly against his erstwhile praetorian prefect. Tiberius had, in any case, come to believe that Sejanus was about to seize the throne from him,³² but the vagueness of the emperor's charges against Sejanus in the senate on 18th October 31 suggests that, however reprehensible the conduct of Sejanus had been in the eyes of Tiberius, it was not technically illegal and that Tiberius had no firm proof of conspiracy.³³ A marriage between Sejanus and Livia fits this category of an action which opposed the will of the emperor without being evidence in itself of anything illegal. On the other hand, such an action would have arrogantly pre-empted and even superseded the position that Tiberius had been already holding out to Sejanus through an alliance with Julia. This blatant disregard of the emperor's wishes may have caused Tiberius to fear that Sejanus was ready to usurp his position.

The evidence of statements of fact from Tacitus and Dio concerning the marriage of Sejanus, the further allusions to the marriage-plans of Sejanus and Livia that riddle Book Four of the *Annals* and the historical circumstances of Sejanus' fall, combine to suggest that Sejanus and Livia did celebrate a hurried and clandestine marriage which, when revealed to the emperor helped precipitate the demise of both Sejanus and Livia.

Death of *Livia*

Next, we should consider whether the record of the death of Livia accords with the notice of the suicide of the "wife" of Sejanus, which took place just over a week after the death of Sejanus, as indicated by the *Fasti Ostienses*. Concerning the date and the actual mode of Livia's death, however, there remains some question. Tacitus does not present details of Livia's demise, since the relevant sections of the *Annals* are not extant, but he indicates that

³⁰ Note the predicament that is said to have faced the freedmen of Claudius as they determined how to reveal to Claudius the marriage of Messalina (Tac. *Ann.* 11.28–30).

³¹ The line adopted by Suetonius *Tiberius* 65.1, that Tiberius had only made the offer of a marriage-alliance to Sejanus to deceive him, smacks of post-eventum evaluation of Tiberius' motives, perhaps culled by Suetonius from the "Autobiography" of Tiberius. In any case, Suetonius agrees with Tacitus that Tiberius had not wanted Sejanus to marry Livia.

It has also been suggested that Tiberius used Livia actually to entrap Sejanus, but the evidence for this is slight (P. Sinclair, "Tacitus' Presentation of Livia Julia", *AJPh* 111 (1990) 254, n. 41).

³² The fact of Tiberius' alternative arrangements in case his attack against Sejanus failed suggests the seriousness of the emperor's concern (R. S. Rogers, *Criminal Trials and Criminal Legislation Under Tiberius* [Middleton, 1935] 106–107).

³³ Juvenal *Satires* 10.69–72; Dio 58.10.1, 2, 5, 8; 58.12.4; on these charges, see R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958) 752–3. The official version became that Sejanus had conspired against Tiberius (D. Hennig, *L. Aelius Sejanus* [München, 1975] 144 ff.).

she died prior to the deaths of Sejanus' two younger children, who were executed in November/December 31.³⁴ Tacitus makes a firm statement on this chronological sequence as he begins his narrative of the events of A.D. 32 (*Annals* 6.2.1):

At Romae principio anni, quasi recens cognitis Liviae flagitiis ac non pridem etiam punitis, atroces sententiae dicebantur in effigies quoque ac memoriam eius . . .

Tacitus, therefore, places the death of Livia well before January 32, clearly before the deaths of the two younger children of Sejanus (cf. *Annals* 5.9). Dio 58.11.7, however, reports two differing accounts of Livia's death, but both these versions place the death of Livia after the children of Sejanus were executed.³⁵ In fact, Dio claims that the death of Livia was consequent upon the post-mortem evidence of Apicata, who committed suicide because of the deaths of her children. Dio reports that Tiberius investigated Apicata's allegations, found them sufficiently proven, and then either himself put Livia (and others) to death or handed Livia over to Antonia who then starved her daughter to death. On either of Dio's reckonings, Livia cannot have died much before the end of A.D. 31, and the rider added, that these events occurred ὕστερον relative to the time of the death of Sejanus on 18th October (Dio 58.13.1), suggests that Livia's execution was quite a bit later than October.³⁶

A close examination of the internal consistency of Dio's account gives reasons for doubting the veracity of his chronology. Despite Dio's apparent claims of two versions of Livia's death, it is possible to reconcile these two. By recording that Tiberius executed Livia, Dio may simply have glossed over the fact that Livia was forced to commit suicide, since often a forced suicide and a so-called execution amounted to the same thing.³⁷ If Livia had been forced to kill herself, it could well have been at the instigation of Antonia.³⁸ Dio

³⁴ Livia's death has clearly been recorded in the missing sections of the *Annals*, and the deaths of the children are mentioned as having post-dated her demise, the latter being placed late in 31 (*Annals* 5.9). The deaths of the children are placed by the *Fasti Ostienses* between 14th November and the 13th December, fully according with the evidence of Tacitus.

³⁵ Suetonius does not state how Livia died, although his text could imply that she was one of those tortured and executed for involvement in the death of Drusus (*Tib.* 62.1). This would make his account square with that of Dio; yet, Suetonius' failure to cite Livia by name in this context makes her death at this time unlikely.

³⁶ Suetonius adds to the impression that the events put in train by Apicata lasted some time, since he claims that the investigation of the allegations of Drusus' murder consumed Tiberius (*Tib.* 62.1).

³⁷ In the case of Dio's report of the death of Mutilia Prisca, first he attributes to her a dramatic suicide in the senate (Dio 58.4.6), then later it is stated simply that Tiberius destroyed her (Dio 58.4.7). Other sources also gloss over these matters. E.g., Suetonius reports that the death of Nero, son of Germanicus, was suicide (*Tib.* 54.2), then that Tiberius had him killed (*Tib.* 61.1). Similarly, in the cases of Aemilius Scaurus and Cremutius Cordus, both of whom in fact committed suicide, Suetonius *Tiberius* 61.3 reports that they were killed.

³⁸ Tacitus *Annals* 6.25.1, for example, makes a comparable statement about starvation, that Agrippina the Elder committed suicide, whether forced or otherwise, he was not sure.

has simply reported the death of Livia in two different ways,³⁹ both consistent with the line that Livia died of starvation at the prompting of her mother.⁴⁰

The substance of this report concerning Livia's forced suicide, however, makes implausible the link between Livia's death and her conviction for murder. If Tiberius did hand Livia over to Antonia for punishment, his indulgence suggests that Livia, at that time of her death, had not yet been convicted of the crime of murdering Drusus. It is impossible that Tiberius would have or could have shown Livia any "mercy" had she been found guilty of the murder of the heir-apparent (*Tac. Ann.* 3.12.5). The implication of this description of her death is that Livia died before Apicata made her denunciation late in the year.

In addition, the motive assigned to Apicata for sending details of Drusus' death to the emperor, revenge upon Livia for stealing Sejanus from her, need not be given credence, since it was the deaths of her children late in the year that allegedly inspired Apicata to act, not the death of Sejanus in October. The object of Apicata's post-mortem attack more probably was the author of her children's destruction, Tiberius, whom she would make rue the death of his son much as she had suffered over the deaths of her children. The link between Livia and Apicata has clearly been made by Dio or his source because Apicata's information necessarily damned Livia, but the timing of Apicata's revelations makes jealousy an unlikely motive.

There is a direct conflict between Tacitus and Dio on the timing of Livia's death, but, since the *Annals* in no way disagrees with the *Fasti Ostienses* and Dio's account must,⁴¹ the implicit chronology of Tacitus appears more plausible. In addition, since the manner of Livia's death, as described by Dio, is incompatible with her having sustained a murder charge, it is clear that Dio has erroneously assumed a causal and temporal connection between the deaths of Apicata and Livia.⁴² Given the manifest error of Dio, there is no impediment, therefore, in accepting that Livia died close in time to the date of the execution

³⁹ Dio has inserted this second account of Livia's death in rather an ad-hoc fashion, and so this extract may derive from a historical context different from the one into which he has inserted it, and which did not necessarily connect Livia's death with the charges made by Apicata.

⁴⁰ On the surface, the claim that Antonia starved Livia to death portrays Antonia as no more than a public executioner, but this statement is simply a crude way of indicating that Antonia forced Livia to commit suicide.

⁴¹ Whoever was the wife of Sejanus, Apicata or Livia, neither, according to Dio's chronology, could have committed suicide in October 31 as the *Fasti Ostienses* demand.

⁴² Dio may have simply inferred that Livia died at approximately the same time that the formal denunciation of her was made by the senate (in January 32). Dio himself claims that the circumstances of Apicata's denunciation and Livia's death, narrated alongside the downfall of Sejanus, are not in their correct chronological position, and it may have been through this re-arrangement of material that confusion arose between the date of the death of Livia, that of the letter of Apicata, and the time of Livia's official condemnation. Tacitus has similarly divorced the formal denunciation of Livia, dated specifically to the start of 32 (*Annals* 6.2.1), from its immediate historical context. The reasons for Livia's *damnatio memoriae* have not been recorded specifically by Tacitus, but since the *Annals* has partly looked forward to events of 31 under the discussion of the events of 23, it would not be at all surprising if Tacitus has discussed the whole affair and its longer-term ramifications at the time of the exposure of Sejanus – in fact, as Dio also has done.

of Sejanus, as Tacitus indicates, and that her death, whatever its precise motivation, was officially deemed suicide, as Dio reports indirectly.⁴³

Sejanus and Livia

Lastly, we should consider why Sejanus (and Livia) would have risked the ire of Tiberius by marrying. If Sejanus and Livia did marry, they must have done so in the interval between May and October 31, probably in October itself. It was at this time in particular that Sejanus was losing ground politically,⁴⁴ and such a marriage could have been his attempt to counter the popularity of Gaius, the son of Germanicus,⁴⁵ by marrying the sister of Germanicus.⁴⁶ Sejanus may have felt himself forced into this course of action because he believed that Tiberius was in extremely poor health, dying or even dead (Dio 58.6.3, 5; cf. Dio 58.4.9).⁴⁷ Sejanus must have perceived that a deliberate policy had been implemented to detain him in Rome, far away from the imperial court, where matters of succession would be being determined.⁴⁸ Since he could not make any plans from within the court to secure his position, he may have decided that, as the husband of Livia, he had at least an outside chance of seizing power from Gaius, in the event of Tiberius' death (cf. Juvenal *Satires* 10.61–4, 72–7).

In this climate of intrigue, Sejanus and Livia may have celebrated a “secret” marriage, in October 31, an alliance which came to the ear of Antonia. Antonia then passed on this intelligence to Tiberius, almost certainly realizing at that time that she was making a choice between her daughter and Tiberius and her grandson Gaius. The emperor, already alert to the overweening ambition of Sejanus, may have decided that he had to eliminate him in favour of Gaius – hence the letter and execution of the 18th October.

A marriage between Livia and Sejanus would have appeared utterly disgraceful and treacherous in the light of Antonia's and Tiberius' suspicions about Sejanus, so Livia, ha-

⁴³ See P. Sinclair, “Tacitus' presentation of Livia Julia”, *AJPh* 111 (1990) 253–256.

⁴⁴ Sejanus, we should note however, was in possession of *imperium proconsulare* between May and October 31 and during the same year had been given a priesthood (Dio 58.7.4–5). He seems, on the surface, to have been in a position to have waited for power, yet his influence was visibly diminishing, as evidenced by the failure of his attempt to have Lucius Arruntius prosecuted (dated between 1st July and 1st October). On the case of Arruntius, see R. S. Rogers, *Criminal Trials and Criminal Legislation Under Tiberius* (Middleton, 1935) 108–109.

⁴⁵ On the popularity of Gaius because of his relationship to Germanicus, see, for example, Josephus *AJ* 18.166, 206–10; Suet. *Gaius* 13. Note also that Josephus defines Antonia as the mother of Germanicus, although he had died almost twenty years before the date of the reference and about eighty years before Josephus himself wrote (*AJ* 18.164).

⁴⁶ On the importance of Livia, see, for example, Tacitus *Annals* 4.3.4, 4.40.5.

⁴⁷ See, for example, the full account given by [Dio] 58.6.2–5, 7.3–9.2, where the inconsistency of Tiberius' attitude towards Sejanus in A.D. 31 is expressed.

If Sejanus had married Livia to undermine Gaius, this could have been at the basis of the accusation against Sejanus made by Tiberius in his “Autobiography” (Suet. *Tib.* 61.1: . . . ausus est scribere Seianum se punisse, quod comperisset furere adversus liberos Germanici filii sui . . .).

⁴⁸ On the desperation of Sejanus at this time, see R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958) 406.

ving compromised herself and the reputation of the imperial family, then was no doubt forced into suicide. In some ways, the situation of Livia finds a close parallel to that of Messalina in A.D. 47. Domitia Lepida urged her daughter Messalina to commit suicide when her marriage to her lover Silius had been made known to the princeps (Tacitus *Annals* 11.37.4–5).⁴⁹ Antonia could have made the same demand of her daughter, perhaps for the same reason, and unlike Messalina, Livia took her mother’s advice.⁵⁰

According to this reconstruction, Livia’s “suicide” must have followed close upon the heels of her husband, on the 26th October, as reported by the *Fasti Ostienses*. Then came the execution of Sejanus’ two younger children in November/December. Following the exposure of the bodies of the children on the Gemonian stairs, Tiberius received the letter of Apicata. The emperor then must have instigated a full investigation of Drusus’ death and found both Sejanus and Livia guilty of the charges made by Apicata. In January A.D. 32, the senate officially excoriated Livia’s memory.⁵¹

Conclusion

Having re-evaluated the literary and epigraphical evidence concerning the possible run of events of from 18th October 31 until January 32, I have argued that Livia committed suicide, almost certainly before murder charges were laid against her, close in time to the death of Sejanus. Clearly her death anticipated that of Apicata by some months. According to the *Fasti Ostienses*, Sejanus’ wife died eight days after him, and by suicide. If we accept that Livia died before Apicata, it can only be concluded that Livia had become Sejanus’ wife, and, therefore, that it was her name, not that of Apicata, inscribed on the *Fasti* as Sejanus’ deceased wife:

VII.K.NO[V.LIVIA]
SEIANI.SE.OCCID[IT]

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⁴⁹ Juvenal *Satires* 10.54–113 and 10.329–345, the former dealing with the downfall of Sejanus, the latter with the marriage of Messalina, may have been deliberately set in contrast to one another, since both these favourites of their respective principes, Sejanus and Messalina, may have fallen because of the same ‘crime’ – the deceit of the princeps by means of a marriage.

⁵⁰ See N. Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta* (London, 1992) 30.

⁵¹ On the two stages of the disgrace of Sejanus, see Tac. *Ann.* 6.2.1, Dio 58.16.6–7.