

ABSTRACT

Dressing the Part: The Costume of Roman Women

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Although women in antiquity are often perceived as suppressed and inferior by modern readers, Roman women played specific roles in society. They were daughters, brides, *matronae*, and priestesses. Each woman performed her own responsibilities, fulfilled her societal expectations, and wore a specific costume. Clothes and hair adornment were key features in distinguishing the levels of social and moral hierarchy within the Roman world. They could symbolize a transition from one phase of life to another or idealistic qualities, such as chastity, modesty, purity, and *pudicitia*. Using my own translations of ancient authors, unless otherwise noted, and the visual representations of women in art, this thesis analyzes how the costumes of two categories of ordinary women, young girls and *matronae*, and two categories of extra-ordinary women, brides and the Vestal Virgins, reflect their status, social and economical class, and identity.

DRESSING THE PART" THE COSTUME OF ROMAN WOMEN

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Roman women are often perceived by modern readers as suppressed and inferior. However, women played important roles in Roman society. They were daughters, with the hopes of advantageous marriages; brides, transitioning into the next stage of their life; *matronae*, married women tending their home and raising their children; and priestesses, responsible for the religious well-being of the state. Each woman performed her own responsibilities, fulfilled her societal expectations, and wore a specific costume. Clothes and hair adornment were key features in distinguishing the levels of social and moral hierarchy within the Roman world. They could symbolize a transition from one phase of life to another or idealistic qualities, such as chastity, modesty, purity, and *pudicitia*. Using my own translations of ancient authors, unless otherwise noted, and the visual representations of women in art, this thesis analyzes how the costumes of two categories of ordinary women, young girls and *matronae*, and two categories of extra-ordinary women, brides and the Vestal Virgins, reflect their status, social and economical class, and identity.

Starting with the costume of young girls and *matronae* as a base, since they encompassed the category of ordinary, everyday women, this thesis analyzes women's clothing and hairstyles and their social implications. While the costume of young girls illustrated her innocence and need for protection, the costume of *matronae* signified maturity. She was the head of a household with the expectation

of being a faithful, chaste, and modest wife. Each component of her costume reflected these idealist qualities and her societal obligations. Brides, on the other hand, wore the ceremonial costume of a woman in a transitional phase of life. A bride laid aside her childhood clothes, donned the ceremonial costume for one day, and became a married woman, sporting the traditional attire. Her costume, while transitional, was uniquely her own and reflected her purity and foreshadowed her future expectations. Finally, the costume of the Vestal Virgins incorporated aspects from the costumes of both *matronae* and brides. However, her unusual status as a female, perpetually virgin priestess and ideal symbol of the Roman state put her in a class of her own in the Roman social order. This exclusive in-between status was highly represented in her costume. The components of each woman's dress, from her veiled hair to her decorated dress, reflected her specific roles and societal expectations. Dress was not only a form of expression, but, more importantly, a symbol of women's roles in society.

CHAPTER TWO

Costume of Young Girls and *Matronae*

In the amusing dialogue in Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* between Periplectomenus, a *senex lepidus* (delightful old man), Pleusicles, and the slave Palaestrio, Periplectomenus remarks how happy he is with his bachelor life, free from a nagging, greedy wife. He can do what he wants and spend his money as he pleases. The others reject this sentiment and put forth the counter-argument that producing children, raising them in a rich household and securing the continuity of his family is a pleasurable reward in marriage (3.674). However, it is interesting to note that the argument that having a loving, good wife is a pleasure in itself is never made. Instead, the companions argue that a man's object in marrying a woman is the children she will hopefully bear¹. With a similar opinion on marriage, Gellius states:

Si sine uxore possemus, Quirites, omnes ea molestia careremus; set quoniam ita natura tradidit, ut nec cum illis satis commode, nec sine illis uno modo vivi possit, salutis perpetuae potius quam brevi voluptati consulendum est.

If we could get on without a wife, Romans, we would all avoid that annoyance; but since nature has ordained that we can neither live comfortably with them nor at all without them, we must take thought for our lasting well-being rather than for the pleasure of the moment. (*A.N.*, 1.6.2, trans. S. Dixon)

Both Periplectomenus and Gellius articulate a negative view on Roman marriage.

For men, it is a duty, a necessity to produce a legitimate heir to carry on the family

¹ Also see Treggiari 1991: 183-4.

lineage. But, for women, it offered them a specific place and role in society as a homemaker in charge of taking care of her children and running the household. The qualities of an ideal wife are simply laid out in an inscription describing Amymone, wife of Marcus: *pulcherrima lanifica pia pudica frugi casta domiseda* (very beautiful, wool-making, pious, modest, frugal, chaste, stay-at-home)². While a modern reader might read these stances on marriage and gender roles and conclude that women were politically restricted, confined to the home, and lacked agency in their lives, this would be an unfair stereotype. It fails to take into account that motherhood and being a wife provided a gateway for political power and legitimacy. It gave women a voice. They were able to gain authority through their husbands and children and become successful, leading women.

Livia, wife of Augustus, and Cornelia Africana, mother of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, are prime examples of women who gained notoriety and exerted power through their husbands and children. While Livia is heavily criticized by both her contemporaries and modern scholars for being devious and power-hungry, and her reputation is shrouded by accusations of poisoning her opponents, it is indisputable that she rose to prominence as a public figure, confidant and advisor to Augustus and her son Tiberius, and established precedents for later imperial wives³. Similarly, Cornelia became highly respected in Rome as the mother of the Gracchi brothers. According to Plutarch's accounts of Cornelia in his biography of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, she possessed immense behind-the-scene political power and sway over her sons' political agenda. For instance, Plutarch notes that, at the request of his

² Amymone: *ILS* 8402.

³ Barrett 2002: 115-122. Also see Dennison (2010); Fischler (1994).

mother, Gaius removed his bill prohibiting any man who had been removed from office from holding another public office, a blatant attempt to disqualify Marcus Octavius from holding office. The Roman people gladly let him spare Octavius because they had a high regard for Cornelia, so much that they even erected a bronze statue of her⁴. Quintilian reasserts Cornelia's influence on her sons by stating: "for we have heard that their mother Cornelia had contributed much to the eloquence of the Gracchi, a woman whose most learned speech also has been handed down to future generations in her letters"⁵. Thus Cornelia and Livia test the conventional notions of a traditional matron in several ways: they became influential public figures and were well educated, which is evident by their involvement in politics⁶.

However, with the exception of the Vestal Virgins, women were not permitted to hold public office or play a public role in the Roman state, no matter how much power and influence they exercised behind the scenes⁷. Although women were able to gain publicity and power as wives and mothers of high-ranking officials, they were still expected to remain modest and chaste, symbols of domestic virtues. For instance, despite Livia's and Cornelia's public involvement, each was still considered the epitome of a respected and devout Roman *matrona*, wife of a Roman citizen. They were devoted to their husbands (Cornelia remained a widow

⁴ Plut. *Gracchi*. 1.25

⁵ *nam Gracchorum eloquentiae multum contulisse accepimus Corneliam matrem, cuius doctissimus sermo in posteros quoque est epistulis traditus* (Inst. Orat. 1.1.6).

⁶ D'Ambra 2007: 145.

⁷ Barrett 2002: x; Bauman 1992: 2; Dennison 2010: 41-2.

after the death of her husband) and children⁸. As argued above, a woman's authority was established through her position as a wife, mother, and head of the household. This position as a *matrona* offered her agency over her domain and a highly respected status in the Roman class structure. As a *matrona*, a woman was expected to remain devoted and chaste to her husband, be modest in demeanor, and display piety to her husband and gods. She was also afforded a certain amount of freedom and responsibility in the house. She became mistress of the household, expected to manage and supervise the tasks of household slaves, see to the early education of her children, and weave the family's clothing⁹. Moreover, the most important role of a *matrona* was bearing and raising children, the future of the family. Since motherhood was a dangerous feat, in which a mother was estimated to have to bear at least five babies in order to ensure two of them would survive into adulthood, this role made *matronae* highly respected in the Roman society¹⁰.

The clothing of Roman *matronae* reflected their esteemed role in society and the expectation for a wife to be modest, pious, chaste, and loyal to her husband. Starting from a young age, a girl's wardrobe emphasized her chastity, purity, and her future as a wife and mother. Young girls donned a *toga praetexta*, a toga bordered with a purple band; a *supparus*, an undertunic; a *strophium*, a breastplate; braided hair with a *vitta*; and possibly a *lunula*, a crescent-shaped amulet¹¹. On the night before her wedding a young girl would take off her *toga praetexta*, dedicate it

⁸ Barret 2002; D'Ambra 2007: 145; Wood 1999: 77.

⁹ D'Ambra 2007: 94; Johnson 1957: 137-8;

¹⁰ D'Ambra 2007: 84; Johnson 1957:137

¹¹ Olson 2008: 15-20; Sebesta 1994:46-8.

to the household gods, and assume her ceremonial bridal attire¹². This transition from young, pure maiden to wife and future mother was marked by yet another change in costume. She had earned the right to wear a *stola*, a dress specifically worn by Roman *matronae* as an insignia of their position as respectable and honored women in the society. Paired with the *stola*, a *matrona* would wear a *tunica*, or tunic, her hair braided and wrapped with *vittae*, wool bands, and *palla*, a mantle draped over the woman's head when in public¹³. When worn together, the components of this costume reflected the ideal wife's chastity, modesty, virtues and her specific role in society as the bearer of the future generation. The continuity of the Roman state depended on her fulfilling her role as a mother. Furthermore, it turned women into walking propaganda highlighting the perfect wife. A woman, wearing a *stola*, *vittae*, and *palla* was a constant reminder of values women should strive to uphold.

The Costume of a Young Girl

While the costume of a young girl differs greatly between literary evidence and artistic evidence, a general idea about the dress and adornment of young girls can be inferred. It is gathered from artistic evidence that a freed or freeborn girl's *tunica* reached her feet, much like the garment of a mature woman¹⁴. More specifically, sources assert that girls wore the *toga praetexta*, a toga adorned with a purple band, just like young boys¹⁵. To the Romans of the late republic and empire,

¹² Baldson 1962: 182.

¹³ Olson 2008:27-41; Sebesta 1994: 48-9.

¹⁴ Johnson 1957: 203; Olson 2008: 15; Wilson 1938: 133, 152.

¹⁵ See Cic. *Sest.* 144 and Livy 34.7.2.

the *toga praetexta* was a sign of rank and magistracy, as evident by their explanations of the origin. Macrobius states that in the time of Servius Tullius children did not wear the *praetexta*¹⁶. He even offers four theories that explain why the *toga praetexta* was worn as a symbol of honor:

1. The first *toga praetexta* was worn by Tullus Hostilius because it was the costume of Etruscan magistrates and then continued to be the costume of kings and dignitaries.
2. When Tarquinius Priscus wished to emphasize the respect due to freeborn boy, he ordered that they should wear the golden bulla and a *toga praetexta*, provided that their fathers held a magistracy or horse.
3. The *toga praetexta* was an honor awarded to a boy who helped rid Rome of a plague.
4. The first-born boy of a Sabine woman was given the right to wear the *toga praetexta*¹⁷.

Although it is unknown when girls adopted this dress, several authors do confirm that the *toga praetexta* became the dress of young girls at some point¹⁸. In fact, it is possible that this costume was the earliest form of dress for both men and women: “Varro says...that once the toga was the common garment for both night and day, for both men and women”¹⁹. Therefore, if it was traditionally a garment worn by both men and women, then it is reasonable to affirm that children of both sexes also wore the *praetexta*²⁰. Cicero, referring to the daughter of Publius Annius, references a girl wearing a *praetexta* when he asks Verres, *eripies igitur pupillae togam praetextam, detrahes ornamenta non solum fortunae sed etiam ingenuitatis* (“therefore would you tear off the *toga praetexta* of the pupil, would you remove the ornaments not only of

¹⁶ Macrobius 1.6.7. (*sed illo saeculo puerilos non usurpat praetexta*)

¹⁷ Macrobius 1.6.7-13, 15-16. Translated by Sebesta (1994): 51.

¹⁸ Olson 2008: 15.

¹⁹ *Olim toga fuit commune vestimentum et diurnum et nocturnum et muliebre et virile* (Nonius 541 M). Translated by Sebesta (1994): 47.

²⁰ Sebesta 1994: 47.

her fortune but even freedom”)²¹. Visual representations of young girls offer a similar view. A young girl on the north side of the Ara Pacis is depicted wearing the same garment as her young male companions (see figure 1). All three young attendants wear a toga wrapped around their body and draped over their left arm.



Figure 1²²
Frieze from the North side of the Ara Pacis



Figure 2²³
Villa Doria Pamphilia (13 BC- A.D. 5)

A defining characteristic of the *toga praetexta* is the purple band bordering the edge of the cloth. This band not only set the young wearer apart from the older members of society, it served as a protective border during sexual immaturity, when the child was defenseless against evil²⁴. Quintilian notes that the toga had protective powers “by which we make sacred and venerable the weakness of children”²⁵. Festus adds that children clad in *togae praetextae* were even shielded from

²¹ 2 *Verr.* 1.113.

²² Olson 2008: 17; Fig. 1.3.

²³ Olson 2008: 19; Fig. 1.5.

²⁴ Sebesta 1994: 47.

²⁵ *Quo infirmitatem pueritiae sacram facimus ac venerabilem* (*Decl.* 340.13).

inappropriate or obscene language²⁶. The protective power of the toga stems from its purple border. The color purple, and a wide range of red hues in which the Romans included purple, was commonly associated with blood, which symbolically represents life. This wide range of purple and red hues was often used in different cultures to protect those who were seen as defenseless against evil, such as children, babies, pregnant women, and the elderly²⁷.

When boys reached puberty they abandoned their *toga praetexta*, dedicated it to the household Lar, and assumed the all-white *toga virilis*²⁸. In a similar fashion, upon sexual maturity, girls dedicated their childhood garment to Fortuna Virinalis. Arnobius and Propertius verify this ritual. In his address to pagan Romans in the late third century CE, Arnobius asks, *puellarum togulas Fortunam defertis ad Virinalgem?* (Do you still offer little togas of maidens to Fortuna Virinalis?)²⁹. Likewise, Propertius states that the *toga praetexta* of an unmarried girl was removed and replaced by her bridal costume: *mox, ubi iam facibus cessit praetexta maritis* (“soon, when her *toga praetexta* yielded to the marriage torches...”). Sexual maturity for a girl signified that she had survived the weakness of childhood and no longer needed the protection of her purple-bordered toga.

Like the purple border of the *toga praetexta*, the *lunula*, a moon-shaped pendant, was an apotropaic amulet meant to protect a young girl during her fragile childhood. The *lunula* closely resembles a young boy’s *bullula*, an amulet abandoned

²⁶ Festus 283 L: *praetextatis nefas erat obscene verbo uti, ideoque praetextum appellabant sermonem, qui nihil obscenitatis haberet.*

²⁷ Sebesta 1994: 47.

²⁸ For more on the toga see Stone (1994) and Dolansky (2008).

²⁹ Arn. *Ad. Nat.* 2.67.

along side the *toga praetexta* when a boy came of age³⁰. However, the actual existence of *lunula* and whether young girls wore it is contradicted between literary and visual sources. First, the author Plautus assert the existence of *lunula* in his play *Epidicus* when Epidicus asks a young girl *non meministi me auream ad te afferre natali die lunulam atque anellum aureolum in digitum?* (“do you not remember me bringing the a gold *lunula* to you on your birthday and a little gold ring for your finger”)³¹. Isidore of Seville reaffirms this notion by explicitly stating that *lunulae sunt ornamenta mulierum in lunae similitudinem, bullulae aureae dependentes* (“*lunulae* are ornaments of women in the likeness of the moon, hanging gold *bullae*”)³². Thus, literary sources confirm the existence of *lunulae* and from this, it can be assumed that young girls traditionally wore this amulet before becoming mature women. Visual sources, on the other hand, tell a different story. As far as scholars are aware, there is no visual evidence that girls wore these amulets. *Lunulae* are non-existent on young girls in Roman art³³. For instance, a necklace cannot be seen on the young girl depicted on the north side of the Ara Pacis (figure 1). However, each of her young male companions clearly wears a round *bullula*. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the artist was familiar with the apotropaic amulets worn by young children, and thus would have included it if he believed it reflected the image of children during that time. Similarly, in a relief of a family from Villa Doria Pamphilia dating back to 13 B.C.- A.D. 5, there is no sign of a *lunula* on the

³⁰ Dolansky 2008.

³¹ Pl. *Epid.* 639-40.

³² *Etym.* 19.31.17).

³³ Gabelmann “Römische Kinder” (referenced by Olson, Sebesta, and Huskinson); Olson 2008: 16 and 18.

young girl positioned in the middle of the other two women (figure 2). Thus, based on the inconsistencies between literary and visual sources, it is uncertain whether young girls actually wore a *lunula*.

Underneath her *toga praetexta* a young girl wore a *supparus*, or undertunic. A *supparus* is commonly associated with the costume of both a young girl and a bride³⁴. However, the construction and understanding of this garment is skewed by inconsistency in rendering a translation for the word. Kelly Olson and Lillian Wilson, leading historians on the subject of Roman costumes, argue that the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* incorrectly defines this article of clothing as a shawl or scarf, based off Lucan's description. Lucan, the only author to describe the garment in detail, mentions it in reference to the costume of the bride and depicts it as narrow and short sleeved: *non...umerisque haerentia primis/ Suppara nudatos cingunt angusta lacertos* ("no narrow *suppara* hanging from the tips of the shoulders enclosed the bare upper arms")³⁵. However, Nonius unequivocally contradicts the idea that the *supparus* was a shawl or scarf. He states that *supparum est linteum femorale usque ad talos pendens* ("the *supparum* is a linen [covering] for the legs hanging down all the way to the ankles")³⁶. While Varro defines it as a garment worn "above" (*supra*) the tunic, he clearly means an undergarment in the passages where it is used³⁷. Finally, Festus, quoting a line from Afranius, states, *puella non sum, supparo si induta*

³⁴ Olson 2008: 15.

³⁵ Luc. 2.364; translation by Olson.

³⁶ Non. 866-67L (540M).

³⁷ Var. *L.* 5.131. But, "there is no assurance that, etymologically, it has any connection with...*supra*" (Wilson 1938: 165). Also see Olson 2003.

sum ("Am I not a girl, if I am clothed in a *supparus*")³⁸. Thus, Festus implies that the *supparus* is a garment worn by *puellae* (young girls).

Artistic sources provide even less clarity on the subject. In Gabelmann's investigation of the costume of young girls, he concludes that it is difficult to achieve an understanding of the garment that a young girl wore under the toga because it is not often depicted in art³⁹. For instance, the undergarment of the young girl on the north side of the Ara Pacis (see figure 1) cannot be seen. Therefore, based on literary references, the *supparus* was most likely a linen undertunic hanging down to the feet, which was worn by both young girls and brides.



Figure 3⁴⁰
Terracotta Lamp

³⁸ Fest. 407L (311M).

³⁹ Gabelmann "Römische Kinder". Sebesta (1994) references this idea.

⁴⁰ Goldman 1994: 235; Fig. 13.27.

Girls also wore a breast band, or *strophium*, meant to support the breasts or give them firmness⁴¹. This was often a linen or cotton band wrapped around the woman's chest⁴² (figure 3). According to Nonius, the breast band was specifically used on young girls to check or restrict the growth of a young maiden's breasts: *strophium est fascea brevis quae virginalem horrorem cohabit papillarum* ("the *strophium* is a small band which checks the growth of/restricts the virgin dread of breasts")⁴³. Terence's *Eunuch* confirms this function, for when Chaerea confides in his friend Parmeno about his lover, he says that she is a girl "not like the virgins in our society whose mothers...bind their breasts to make them slim...thus they are loved"⁴⁴. The act of binding a young woman's breasts was not to shame or hurt her in any way. In fact, it was meant to make her more attractive to male suitors. According to the literary and visual sources, the ideal shape of a woman was different in antiquity: the ideal woman possessed small breasts and wide hips⁴⁵.

⁴¹ On the subject of brassiere, see Goldman 1994 235. In an experiment with a linen band seventy inches by eight he concludes that, "the band would be most efficiently used as a brassiere by bringing the ends around the back so that each long end crossed in front, supporting the breasts".

⁴² Goldman 1994: 235; Olson 2003: 203-4.

Figure 2: Terracotta Roman lamp showing Cupids helping Venus tie her *strophium*. Deneauve, *Lampes de Carthage*, no. 415.

⁴³ Non. 863L (538M).

⁴⁴ Terr. *Eun.* 313-17: *haud similis virgost virginum nostrarum, quas matres student/ demissis umeris esse, vincto pectore, ut gracilae sient/ si qua est habitior Paulo, pugilem esse aiunt, deducunt cibum:/ tam etsi bonast natura, reddunt curatura iunceam:/ itaque ergo amantur*. Translated by Olson (2003): 204.

⁴⁵ For instance, in *Gynecology* 2.15, Soranus instructed nurses to "swaddle a female infant tightly at the breasts and more loosely at the hips, 'to take on the shape that in women is more becoming'" Olson 2003: 204. In J. Clarke's *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art 100 B.C.- A.D. 250*, 150, fig. 49 scene of lovemaking, Pompeii, House of the Beautiful Impluvium, a couple reclines on a bed. The woman is wearing a *strophium* and has distinguishably wide hips. See figure 6.

Literary sources briefly glaze over the hairstyle of young girls. Nonius, quoting Varro, asserts that before marriage *minoris natu capite aperto erant, capillo pexo, vittis innexis crinibus* ("younger [girls] were with an uncovered head, combed hair, hair bound with *vittae*")⁴⁶. The Romans often used *vittae*, woolen bands, to indicate that the wearer was ritually pure and connected to the gods in some way⁴⁷. For instance, *vittae* were also worn by the Vestal Virgins, the priestesses of Vesta who were prominent for their perpetual virginity and loyalty to Rome⁴⁸. While no author names a color specific to the young girl's *vittae*, Judith Sebesta argues that white would be the most appropriate, as white was used by Romans in rites concerning the gods. Other colors, such as purple, which was used in funeral rites and in rites concerning the gods of the underworld, were used at a specific occasion⁴⁹. Thus, young girls wore *vittae* as a symbol of their chastity⁵⁰. However, *vittae* are almost never visible in portraits of young girls⁵¹. But that does not mean the woolen bands did not exist in antiquity. Susan Wood argues that *vittae* may have been painted into the braids of statues, but the paint has now disappeared⁵².

⁴⁶ Non. 353L.

⁴⁷ Sebesta 1994:48.

⁴⁸ See chapter 3.

⁴⁹ Sebesta 1994: 48.

⁵⁰ Bardis 1963: 39.

⁵¹ Olson 2008:18.

⁵² Wood 1999: 98.



Figure 4⁵³

Concerning the young girl's hairstyle, it is commonly believed that young girls wore their hair braided, as previously stated. One scholar argues that girls' hair was braided down the back with the *vittae* woven in⁵⁴. Several scholars believe that girls' hair was sometimes worn in the "melon hairstyle" (*Melonenfrisur*): twisted back from the crown in sections and wound into a low bun at the back of her head⁵⁵ (figure 4). This hairstyle is depicted in the relief of a family from Villa Doria Pamphilia, in which the young girl wears her hair twisted back into a low bun (figure 2). It is safe to assume that the young girl is donning a "melon hairstyle", since in portraits it generally indicated that the subject was unmarried⁵⁶. While a general picture of girl's hair can be drawn, no one hairstyle is common to all young girls, not even in a single time period⁵⁷.

⁵³ Olson 2008: 18; Fig. 1.4.

⁵⁴ Richardson 1977: 485. However, Olson believes there is no evidence of this type of hairstyle in literary or artistic sources.

⁵⁵ Olson 2008:18.

⁵⁶ Kleiner and Matheson 1996: 141.

⁵⁷ Olson 2008: 19.

The costume of young girls, despite the contradictions between literary and visual sources, reflects their status as weak and fragile during childhood. The apotropaic elements of their costume, such as the purple boarder of their *toga praetexta* and the *lunula* amulet, demonstrate their need for protection. Therefore, young girls were in a class of their own, not quite the status of a full-fledged member of society but elevated above the slave, who wore a *tunica*, not a *stola*⁵⁸. Furthermore, a girl's *vittae* represent her purity, innocence, chastity, and the expectation that she remain chaste until marriage. Once a young girl came of age, she abandoned her *toga praetexta*, donned her ceremonial wedding clothes, and then transitioned into the next stage of her life as a *stola*-clad *matrona*.

Costume of a Roman Matrona

Quae uno contentae matrimonio fuerant conrona pudicitiae honorabantur; existimabant enim praecipue matronae sincera fide incorruptum esse animim qui despositae viginitatis cubile egredi nesciret...

Sed quo matronale decus verecundiae munimento tutius esset, in ius vocanti matronam corpus eius attingere non permiserunt, ut inviolata manus alienae tactu stola relinqueretur.

Those women who were content with one marriage used to be honored with a crown of *pudicitia*; for our ancestors considered that the mind of a *matrona* was particularly uncorrupted, with the bond of fidelity unbroken, when it did not know to leave the bed on which her virginity had been laid down...

Then, so that the matronal honor would be most safely guarded by the protection of *verecundia*, they did not allow a person calling to court a *matrona* to touch her body, so that her *stola* would remain untainted

⁵⁸ Sebesta 1994: 67, 74.

by the touch of an unrelated man's hand. (Val. Max. 2.1.3-3, trans. R. Langlands)⁵⁹.

Pudicitia, translated as chastity, modesty, or sexual virtue, governs an individual's "sexuality and relationships with others and with society as a whole, and it also has profound implications for nonsexual behavior"⁶⁰. Moreover, in Roman culture, there is a distinction between a virtue, something displayed through action, and sex, which is an exclusive and private action⁶¹. However, virtue and sex are synonymous in reference to Roman women. Their virtue, or moral excellence, is highly predicated on their chastity, virginity, and sexual loyalty to their husbands, attributes made publically visible in their dress and gestures. Valerius Maximus, as quoted above from his *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, draws a correlation between a *matrona*, *pudicitia*, honor, and her *stola*. According to Valerius Maximus, monogamous women dedicated to their husbands were considered uncorrupted and faithful, and displayed *pudicitia*. Furthermore, honor, which was protected by her modesty, was bestowed on a *stola*-wearing *matrona*. Because the *stola* was depicted as a garment meant to be untainted and pure, I argue that a woman's *stola* represented her modesty, sexual virtue, and the honor granted to her for exhibiting these qualities. Thus, sex and virtue were public entities put on display through a woman's costume.

⁵⁹ According to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, *verecundia* is defined as shyness, modesty, respect, disgrace, or shame. In reference to this passage, I will like to translate it as modesty or respect.

⁶⁰ Langlands 2006: 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

The costume of a Roman *matrona* consisted of a long tunic, a *stola*, various kinds of intricate hairstyles bound by *vittae*, and a *palla*, the mantle-like veil draped over her head in public. Individually, each component of this costume symbolizes modesty, chastity, or sacred connotations. However, when worn together, they create the image of an ideal married woman, one who is honorable, chaste, faithful, and exhibits *pudicitia*. This attire is uniquely that of *matronae* and sets them apart from other women in the society. It reflects the idea that the wife of a Roman citizen should wear her virtue and honor literally on her sleeve.

The ideal *matrona* was an exemplum of morality. Lucretia, whose story of rape and defiance is detailed by Livy, was the epitome of an ideal woman. Lucretia was the wife of Collatinus, who, while away at war, struck up an alcohol-fueled competition with his comrades to determine whose wife displayed the greatest amount of maternal virtue. After visiting their respective homes and determining Lucretia the winner, one of the men, Tarquinius, returned a few days later, with “a wicked desire to force *stuprum* (dishonor or illicit sexual behavior) upon Lucretia” (*ibi Sex. Tarquinius mala libido Lucretiae per vim stuprandae capit*)⁶². Excited by her beauty and proven purity, Tarquinius forced himself upon her, conquered her *obstantem pudicitiam* (stubborn *pudicitia*), and left her with *expugnato decore* (overcome honor). Distressed, she called out to her trusted friends to come to her at once. Once by Lucretia’s side they asked whether she was unwell, to which she replied: *quid enim salvi est mulieri amissa pudicitia?* (“Even how can a woman be

⁶² Livy 1.57.6-10. Translation by Langlands.

well having lost her *pudicitia*?"). Shortly after confessing her situation, she elected to kill herself with a knife than live with the mark of *impudicitia*⁶³.

While Lucretia is an example of a woman who possesses and controls her *pudicitia* by offering her own life as retribution for her guilt and fault, the immense pressure on her morality is her downfall⁶⁴. She believed that even though she was innocent in the act, she deserved punishment. This demonstrates the high amount of pressure that was placed on a woman to preserve her honor and *pudicitia*.

Furthermore, Livy's story equates a woman's morality to the integrity of her household and emphasizes that it is something that can be seen or put on display⁶⁵. The husbands in the beginning of the tale are even able to gain honor from their wife's beauty, chastity, and *pudicitia*. Thus, the story of Lucretia demonstrates how important a woman's morality was to her household and the image she projected to society. This story is found in the works of several ancient authors, including Seneca, Ovid, and Valerius Maximus, and satirists such as Juvenal and Martial⁶⁶. Cicero even references her in his political and philosophical works⁶⁷.

Thus, a woman was expected to value her *pudicitia* and character more than her own life, for without her morality, she was nothing. These high expectations were not only displayed in her actions, but also her attire. She was required to dress the part of a respectable *matrona*.

⁶³ Livy 1.57.6-1.59.3.

⁶⁴ Langlands 2006: 80; 94-5.

⁶⁵ Langlands 2006: 96.

⁶⁶ Langlands 2006: 82.

⁶⁷ *Fin.* 2.20; *Leg.* 2.10; *Rep.* 2.46-7.

The Tunica and Stola



Figure 5⁶⁸
Gap-Sleeved Tunica

The *tunica* was the basic garment of every Roman woman and differed in sleeve length depending on her social station or activity. It was a uniquely status-free garment, meaning any women might wear a *tunica*⁶⁹. It could either be worn by itself, or under a *stola* if the wearer was a *matrona*⁷⁰. Women who did not engage in laborious activities wore voluminous tunics with long sleeves, while working women wore simple tunics with short sleeves. Several scholars have noted that the female tunic would have elbow-length sleeves regardless, because they were usually made from a single, wide piece of cloth⁷¹. However, gap-sleeved tunics, which were constructed from two rectangular pieces of cloth, became popular in the second and first century B.C. (figure 5)⁷².

⁶⁸ Goldman 1994: 218; Fig. 13.5.

⁶⁹ Kampen 1981: 55.

⁷⁰ Olson 2008: 25.

⁷¹ Olson 2008: 25; Wilson 1938: 152.

⁷² Croom 2002: 79-80.

Ancient authors suggest that a woman might have worn two different tunics, an inner and an outer. For instance, in a slightly unnerving passage, Martial mentions that a woman, Lesbia, wears *tunicae* (multiple tunics). Varro in Nonius echoes this idea: *posteaquam binas tunicas habere coeperunt, instituerunt vocare subuculam et indusium* ("afterwards they began to wear two tunics, they decided to call them the *subucula* and *indusium*"⁷³). Since the prefix *sub-* denotes under, it is logical to believe the *subucula* was an undertunic and, therefore, the *indusium* must be an outertunic⁷⁴. However, Wilson asserts that both are specific types of undertunics⁷⁵. Nonius fuels this argument by stating that *indusium est vestimentum quod corpori intra plurimas vestes adhaeret* (the *indusium* is a garment which adheres to the body inside most clothes)⁷⁶. Therefore, there is reason to believe that women wore several layers of *tunicae* as undergarments.

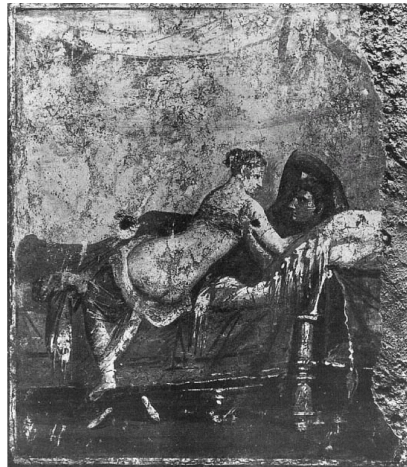


Figure 6⁷⁷
House of the Beautiful Impluvium, Pompeii, A.D. 62-79

⁷³ Non. 870L (542M).

⁷⁴ Olson 2003: 202.

⁷⁵ Wilson 1938: 165-6. Olson (2003) also mentions the differences between the *subucula* and *indusium* at length.

⁷⁶ Non. 866 (539M).

⁷⁷ Clarke 1998: 150. Fig. 49.

Much like young girls, women also bound their breasts with a *strophium*. Olson argues that unlike young girls, the *strophium* of a *matrona* could denote her modesty and moral stance. A respectable married woman might keep her breast band on even when she was intimate with her husband⁷⁸. For instance, a painting from Pompeii dating back between A.D. 62-79 shows a couple reclining on a bed (figure 6)⁷⁹. The woman clearly wears a band across her chest. Martial reiterates this idea, but complains that his wife remains clothed⁸⁰. This is a characteristic of a married woman. Prostitutes, on the other hand, may not have worn a *strophium*. Catullus describes an event in which a prostitute bears her naked breasts to a passerby, revealing that she was not wearing a breast band⁸¹. Thus, the *strophium* could reflect the modesty and *pudicitia* of a *matrona*.



Figure 7⁸²

⁷⁸ Olson 2003: 204.

⁷⁹ Clarke 1998: 150.

⁸⁰ Mart. 11.104.7; Olson 2003: 205.

⁸¹ Cat. 55.11-12; Olson 2003: 205.

⁸² Sebesta 1994: 49; Fig. 2.1.

Above the *tunica* a *matrona* wore a *stola*, the quintessential garment of a Roman citizen's wife. It signaled that the female wearer was married in a *iustum matronium* (legal marriage), and was therefore a mark of rank and honor. Further, the *stola* was essentially synonymous with the matronal status granted to a woman upon marriage⁸³. According to Festus, wearing a *stola* was a privilege, for he states that the Romans, "were calling those matrons, who had the right to wear the *stola*"⁸⁴. Thus, it was a mark of honor and set the *matrona* apart from any other woman. The *stola* was a floor length, slip-like garment worn over a *tunica*, suspended by shoulder straps, belted under the breasts, and characterized by its deep V-shaped neckline (figure 7) ⁸⁵.

While the image of the dress remains constant in visual representations, the terminology used to describe the garment varies in literary sources. The over-dress of a *matrona* is referenced using a variety of names. Wilson notes that Varro calls the garment a *stola* several times (8.28, 9.48, 10.27), whereas Terence, Cato, and Plautus do not. Although they mention a dress specific to *matronae*, it is speculated that the term was commonplace only by the middle of the first century B.C.⁸⁶. Instead, Ovid uses the phrases *longa vestis* (F. 4.134) and *instita longa* (*Ars*. 1.32 and *Trist.* 2.248). The context of *instita longa* in *Ars Amatoria* indicated that Ovid is clearly talking about a respectable, moral woman. He writes: *este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris,/ quaeque tegis medios instita longa pedes*. ("Be far away, fine *vittae*, emblems of modesty, and the long *instita* which covers the feet in the

⁸³ DiLuzio (forthcoming).

⁸⁴ 112L: *matronas appellabant eas fere, quibus stolas habendi ius erat*.

⁸⁵ Croom 2002: 76.

⁸⁶ Wilson 1938: 156.

middle”)⁸⁷. Ovid first references *vittae*, which, as mentioned above, were symbols of modesty and purity. They were also worn by *matronae*. Furthermore, he calls this garment an *instita*, the meaning of which is heavily debated. Horace described the *stola* as *subsuta instita...vesta*, which Margaret Bieber incorrectly rendered as a “dress [suspended] from a sewn-on strap”⁸⁸. But the phrase could also mean “a dress with a band stitched on the lower edge”, which could refer to the *limbus*, a colored border or band sewn around the bottom of the *stola*⁸⁹. Servius is very clear on defining the *limbus* as “the lower part of a garment, which is called an *instita*” (A. 2.616)⁹⁰. Olson notes that Porphyrio, the third century commentator on Horace, states in the scholia that the *instita* “signifies matrons, for these wear a *stola* let fall to the feet, of which, a sewed-on *instita* surrounds the lower part”⁹¹. Therefore, the *instita* is a mark of the *stola*, and by association, Ovid is most likely referencing this garment when he uses the terminology *longa vestis*.

But if the *instita* refers to the border of the *stola*, what function does it serve, or why does it exist? While it could simply exist for esthetic reason, perhaps the *instita* further helps display a woman’s rank and status. When a woman is out in public, she is always wrapped and veiled in the *palla*, covering up the distinctive straps of the *stola*⁹². In fact, the *palla* does often interfere with studying the

⁸⁷ *Ars.* 1.31-2.

⁸⁸ Hor. *S.* 1.2.29. Translated in Olson 2008: 30; mentioned by Bieber 1977: 23; Goldman 1994: 226; Sebesta 1994: 49.

⁸⁹ Olson 2008: 30.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Olson 2008: 30.

⁹² *Ibid.*

garments underneath in visual depictions⁹³. The *instita* or *limbus* would help distinguish the wearer's rank in public, for they were often a different color than the rest of the garment. For instance, Nonius defines *limbus* as *muliebre vestimentum, quod purpuram in imo habet* ("a the garment of a woman, which has purple on the bottom" 869L). Unfortunately, depictions of the *limbus* or *instita* do not survive on sculptures or reliefs, although a border is sometimes visible on the lower edge of women's garments in wall painting (figure 8). Like the *vittae*, they too could have been draw on in paint, which did not last⁹⁴.

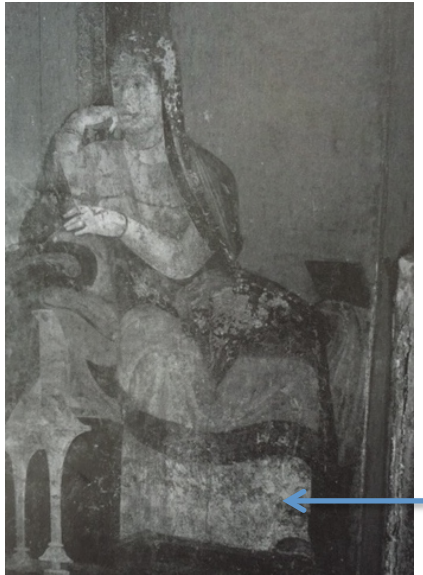


Figure 8⁹⁵



Figure 9⁹⁶
Drunken Old Woman, 3rd or 2nd century BC

Despite the ambiguity surrounding the translation of *subsuta instita*, one aspect of the dress remains widely accepted: the two straps of the *stola* are the

⁹³ Croom 2002: 75.

⁹⁴ Olson 2008: 30.

⁹⁵ Olson 2008: 26; Fig. 1.8.

⁹⁶ Goldman 1994: 227; Fig. 13.16.

defining characteristic⁹⁷. They set the dress apart from the basic *tunica* and consequently signified her rank as a married person. The straps can easily be seen in the sculpture of the *Drunken Old Woman* dating from the late third or second century BC (figure 9). However, this garment is not quite considered a *stola* because it is not worn over a *tunica*⁹⁸. The *stola* was merely a slip and the sleeves of the *tunica* made it more modest. Modesty was a concern especially when the *tunica* underneath was made of thin or transparent material. Women could choose from a number of fabrics, including wool, linen, cotton, and silk, and a variety of colors. One fabric in particular, coan silk, is closely associated with women in antiquity and mentioned by several authors. This thin, almost transparent fabric was both praised and criticized, for it confused moral boundaries by putting the female body on display⁹⁹. The *stola* was essential for creating a layered look and further protecting her modesty. Plautus in *Epidicus* rattles off a list of colors and textiles available for women, indicating that by the middle republic, fashion was a priority. There was an industry geared towards women's fashion¹⁰⁰. Plautus' detailed list of colors also indicates that Roman dyers were able to produce a variety of hues through different treatments and preparations¹⁰¹. A woman was able to choose the color of her garments and possibly even coordinated the colors of her *tunica* and *stola*. Ovid even advised women to develop a taste for selecting colors complimentary to their

⁹⁷ Olson 2008: 30; Sebesta 1994: 49.

⁹⁸ Goldman 1994: 227.

⁹⁹ Olson 2008: 14.

¹⁰⁰ Sebesta 1994 "*Tunica Ralla, Tunica Spissa*": 66.

¹⁰¹ Sebesta 1994 "*Tunica Ralla, Tunica Spissa*": 69. See Sebesta for a detailed description of colors and cloth used from the early Republic to Early Empire.

complexions¹⁰². Like modern fashion, clothing was a way for women to display their wealth and style. The variety of colors and fabrics available for women suggests that there was a certain amount of leeway for them to express themselves through clothing.

The *stola* appeared to become less popular over time, a trend that started as early as the reign of Tiberius in the first century A.D. The second century author Tertullian reported that women began to stop wearing the *stola*¹⁰³. The *stola* is depicted in art as early as the first century B.C., but a majority of the depictions occur during the Julio-Claudian era¹⁰⁴. While the *stola* does appear on statues throughout the second century, A.T. Croom argues that they are likely “examples of women depicted in historical or mythological costume”¹⁰⁵. They might not have been worn by real *matronae* of the time. Perhaps the dress was inconvenient to wear, for the layers and length were probably hot and restricting, especially for working women.

Regardless of how long the *stola* was actually worn by *matronae*, it was irrefutably a mark of the ideal, chaste, distinguished woman. It was a symbol of the honor and duty of a faithful wife, for Martial even termed matronly decorum as “stolate modesty” (*stolatum pudorem* 1.35.8-9). Further, Nonius says the *stola* was called the “honorable garment” (Non. 862L). Not anyone could wear the *stola*. Prostitutes and adulteresses wore a *toga* as a symbol of their lust and dishonor, not because they had assumed the sexual freedom of a male, but that they had lost their

¹⁰² *Ars Amatoria*. 3.170-92.

¹⁰³ *Pall.* 4.9.

¹⁰⁴ Olson 2008: 32.

¹⁰⁵ Croom 2002: 76.

status and role as a mature woman¹⁰⁶. Thus, the *stola* distinguished the wearers as those who possessed all the qualities of a *matrona* and placed them in their own social class.

The Palla



Figure 10¹⁰⁷



Figure 11¹⁰⁸

Like the *stola*, the *palla* was an outward expression of a woman's social and moral status, and the mark of her modesty, honor, and *pudicitia*. The *palla* was a rectangular cloth that served as a veil (figure 10). One end of the *palla* was draped over the left shoulder and wound around a woman's body where it could either be flung over her right shoulder, concealing most of the wearer, or brought under her right arm¹⁰⁹. It was then kept in place by either a brooch or the wearer's hand¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁶ Sebesta 1994: 50.

¹⁰⁷ Olson 2008: 31; Fig. 1.12.

¹⁰⁸ Olson 2008: 34; Fig. 1.14.

¹⁰⁹ Olson 2008: 33.

Wilson notes that the cloth was large enough that “when wrapped about the wearer the upper edge could be brought up over the head while the lower edge would extend about to the knees”¹¹¹. It added to the layered look of the matron’s costume and also protected her head. As in many modern cultures, veiling a woman’s head was meant to shield her from the prying eyes of the public and protect her modesty. Isidore relates women’s veiling as a symbol of male authority over his wife and the desire to keep some aspects of her body for her husband’s eyes only. Therefore, a woman’s veiled head showed respect for her marriage¹¹². Isidore comments that the head *signum enim maritalis dignitatis et potestatis in eo est. caput enim mulieris vir est, inde et super caput mulieris est.* (for it is the symbol of marital rank and power. For man is the head of a woman, and therefore it is over the head of a woman (19.25.4)). Similarly, an anecdote about Gallus, consul in 166 B.C. shows the importance of a woman veiling for the sake of her husband. Gallus divorced his wife because she went unveiled in public, thus allowing everyone to see what only he should be able to see¹¹³. By allowing the public to look upon her head, she compromised her modesty and diminished her purity.

However, Isidore’s comment and the anecdote about Gallus are extreme. As Olson notes, a majority of visual depictions of women, both intimate and public scenes, show women unveiled, possibly to preserve and display their hairstyles¹¹⁴.

¹¹⁰ Croom (2002) argues that the *palla* was not pinned to the *stola* and therefore was set by the wearer’s hand. Wilson (1924), on the other hand, argues that the garment could have been fastened by a brooch.

¹¹¹ Wilson 1938: 148-9.

¹¹² Sebesta 1994: 49.

¹¹³ Valerius Maximus 6.3.10. Summarized by Sebesta and Olson.

¹¹⁴ Olson 2008: 34-6.

For instance, in the Ara Pacis frieze (figure 1), which shows an outdoor and public procession, some women are veiled while others are not. The woman on the far left holding a young child's hand wears a long sleeved *tunica* and *stola*, presumably although the straps are not visible, and is wrapped in a *palla*. But she does not pull up the *palla* into a veil. In contrast, the woman in the center does wear the *palla* like a veil. Why, in a such a public scene, where one would be expect to find all the women with the *palla* drawn up, would a woman be unveiled? Perhaps veiling during the reign of Augustus was up to the decision of her husband or family members¹¹⁵. Olson does observe that of the portrait busts she has analyzed, some hairstyles are high in the front and flat in the middle, where a *palla* would sit (figure 11). It is possible that these depictions are meant to highlight the intricate hairstyles of women and intend for the *palla* to be imagined by the viewer. They serve a different purpose and are not a real-life representation of women. If this is the case, the moral qualities of the *palla* are still depicted, even in its absence¹¹⁶.

Furthermore, were the heavy *pallae* feasible for lower-class working, women? As previously mentioned, the *palla* was possibly held in place by the wearer, making it a hindrance to manual labor. Although there are little literary or visual depictions of lower-class women veiling their heads in public or wearing a *palla*, it is safe to assume that they would not typically don this garment¹¹⁷. Therefore, the *palla* was a representative of class and status as well as gender.

¹¹⁵ Bartman 1999: 44-5; Olson 2008:34-5.

¹¹⁶ Olson 2008: 34.

¹¹⁷ Olson 2008: 35.

Hairstyles

While dress offered women small means of individuality through color and fabric, hair adornment allowed women the most freedom to express their personal style and fashion. Hair could easily be manipulated through cutting, curling, dyeing, and wrapping, which brought a variety of different styles, so much so that “each next day adds adornment”, according to Ovid (*adicit ornatus proxima quaeque dies. Ars.* 3.152). Although the diversity of hairstyles makes studying hair a daunting task, it is made easier through the study of imperial women’s portraits on coins, who arguably dictated the style during their tenure¹¹⁸. Because of the wide circulation and accessibility of coins, no matter where a woman lived in the empire, she could always use these portraits to follow the latest fashions.



Figure 12¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Croom 2002: 96; D'Ambra 2007: 118-9; Evans 1906.

¹¹⁹ D'Ambra 2007: 122; Fig. 66.

In order to achieve the proper look, women would need to use curling irons, hairpins, smoothing ointments, and even hairpieces. Several authors note the use of hair products. Ovid mentions *Germanis herbis* used to dye hair (*Ars.* 3.163), a side effect of the products which is seconded by Martial: *et mutat Latias spuma Batava comas* (“and the Bavarian pomade that transforms Latin hair” (8.33.20)). Elsewhere, in a tag for a golden hairpin, Martial writes: *splendida ne madidi violent bombycina crines, figat acus tortas sustineatque comas* (so that your wet hair does not violate your splendid silk, let a pin fix and hold your twisted hair (14.23)). Many hairpins made of bone, silver, and tortoise shell have been found in the graves of young girls and *matronae*, and are often elaborately decorated, like the bone hairpin decorated with a bust of a woman wearing a towering coiffure dating back to the second century A.D. (figure 12)¹²⁰.



Figure 13¹²¹

Many of the high coiffures of the late first and second century A.D. required hairpieces and a servant's help to achieve its look. The use of hairpieces dates back at least to the time of Ovid, who, in his description of women's hair, writes:

¹²⁰ Croom 2002: 103; D'Ambra 2007: 122.

¹²¹ Left: Croom 1988: 97: Fig. 46.1. Right: Evans 1906: 1; Plate 1.

Femina procedit densissima crinibus emptis,
Proque suis alios efficit aere suos.
Nec rubor est emisse; palam venire videmus
Herculis ante oculos virgineumque chorum.

A woman advances dense with bought hair, and buys another hair for herself with money. Nor does she blush to buy: openly we see them come before the eyes of Hercules and virgin band (*Ars.* 3.165-8).

Ovid notes that it was not embarrassing for women to buy wigs or hairpieces; it was commonplace. They were even sold in the forum. However, not all hairstyles would have required extra hair. Based on visual depictions of the early Julio-Claudian empresses, their coiffure could have been achieved using their own hair. For instance, a coin assumed to represent Livia, or Julia, from around 57 B.C. to A.D. 29, shows a simple, dignified look¹²² (figure 13). It consisted of a band of hair bordering her hairline with a strip of hair on top of the head brushed forward and then folded into a *nodus* (knot). The hair round her head was then lightly curled and round into a low bun¹²³. When the *nodus* phased out of style, Agrippina I, wife of Germanicus and mother of Caligula, modified the style by wearing her hair curled down the side of her face, not tightly or with much volume, and wrapped into a low bun at the nape of the neck. She also dons a single ringlet that falls to the side of her neck and behind her ear (figure 14).

¹²² Identified by Evans (1906: 17) as either Livia or Julia. Croom also provides a frontal sketch of Livia's hair in which the *nodus* is visible.

¹²³ Bartman 2001: 8; Croom 2002: 96. Both mention Livia's *nodus*. However, the profile view on the coin does not show this feature.

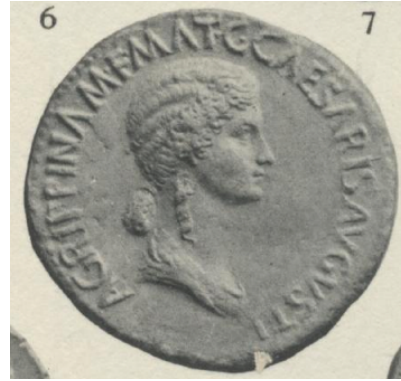


Figure 14¹²⁴



Figure 15¹²⁵

These considerably simplistic coiffures gave way to the more complex and extravagant hairstyles of the Flavian and Trajanic women, which certainly required hairpieces. Coins representing Domitia, wife of Domitian, from 82-83 A.D. depict two different styles (figure 15). One shows her hair heavily curled and stacked at her hairline and brought up into an elongated bun at the nape of her neck. The other shows her hair similarly curled in the front but wrapped up into a mound or coil at the back of her head. There is a stark division between the front crescent shaped “headband” and the remaining portion of her hair, which leads me to believe it is a hairpiece. This idea is further amplified by the Flavian styled marble wig with dense

¹²⁴ Left: Croom 1988: 97: Fig. 46.3. Right: Evans 1906: 1; Plate 1.

¹²⁵ Left: Croom 1988: 97: Fig. 46.5. Right: Evans 1906: 1; Plate 1

curls designed for a portrait statue and the portrait of Julia Titi, daughter of Titus, dating between 80-81 A.D. (figure 16 and 17)¹²⁶.

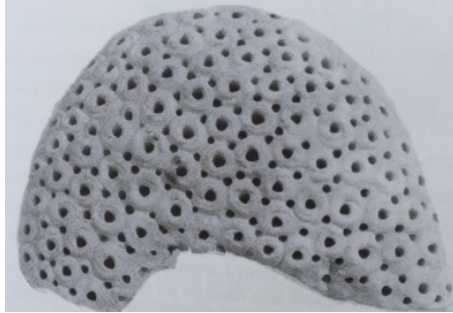


Figure 16¹²⁷

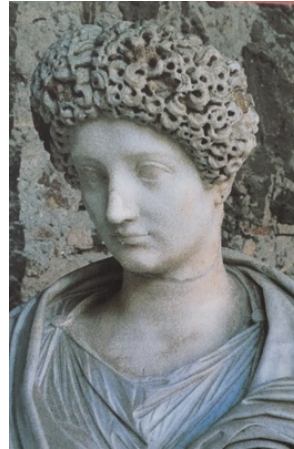


Figure 17¹²⁸

First, the marble wig demonstrates that even portrait statues sported removable hair. Perhaps they too were updated with the newest hairstyle? Secondly, the depiction of Julia Titi shows a frontal view of hair associated with Flavian women, on which the hair is parted and dons tightly packed curls. This style would be hard to achieve without the aid of a hairpiece¹²⁹. Hair became increasingly detailed during the Trajanic period. Both a coin and a bust depicting Trajan's sister Matidia show narrow bands of hair brought up into peaks. Behind the tall portions, small twists of hair are then brought up into an open circle (figure 18)¹³⁰.

¹²⁶ D'Ambra 2007: 120 and 163.

¹²⁷ D'Ambra 2007: 120; Fig. 64.

¹²⁸ D'Ambra 2007: 163; Fig. 88.

¹²⁹ D'Ambra 2007: 163.

¹³⁰ Croom 2002: 98.



Figure 18¹³¹



Figure 19¹³²

Women achieved these looks with the help of servants. Wealthy women employed several hairdressers; Livia is said to have had up to five servants to style her hair. Regardless of complexity, even the most intricate coiffure would not have taken several servants more than an hour or so to complete¹³³. A relief from a third century funerary monument depicts a woman in her room with four servants assisting with her beauty regimen: the first fixes her hair, the second holds a

¹³¹ Left: Bartman 2001: 10; Fig. 7. Right: Evans 1906: Plate 2.

¹³² D'Ambra 2007: 113; Fig. 58.

¹³³ Bartman 2001: 8.

perfume flask, the third holds a mirror, and the fourth holds a pitcher (figure 19)¹³⁴. This not only shows the woman being attended by servants to achieve a respectable, fashionable look, but also the essence of upper class life itself. Women paid a great deal of attention and care into transforming themselves into a model of the beautiful, modest, sexually moral woman society expected them to be. Like the story of Lucretia exemplifies, a woman reflected the dignity of her husband and home. She was a symbol of wealth, *pudicitia*, and stability. Her colorful *stola* and intricately coifed hair, which required the employment of hairdressers, not only reflected positively on her husband who could afford these luxuries, but also on her leisure. Instead of working in the fields to support her family, she could spend hours dressing, reading, and running her household.

Thus, the costume of a *matrona* not only symbolized her perceived modesty, faithfulness, and *pudicitia* as an esteemed and honorable married woman, but also her economic and social class.

¹³⁴ D'Ambra (2007:113) identifies the object under the second attendant's arm as a flask, but it also resembles a jug. Perhaps the jug/flask could also have contained the German hair serums?

CHAPTER THREE

Costume of Roman Brides

Weddings in the Ancient Roman world, as in the modern world, were a celebration introducing the new couple to the community and a ritual marking a woman's passage into womanhood. She set aside childish toys and settled into life as a wife, mother, and *matrona*. Like modern brides, Roman brides were marked by a special costume specific to the occasion, which included the *seni crines* hairstyle, *flammeum* veil, and a *tunica recta* dress woven on an old-fashioned upright loom. Together, these aspects of her clothing paid tribute to religious rituals and demonstrated her transition from a young woman to a respected Roman *matrona*.

A Roman wedding was not primarily a religious ritual, despite the religious acts that took place, but, rather, an event marking the union of two people¹³⁵. In some instances, marriage was a matter of intention, not necessarily legality. If the couple lived together as man and wife, they could be considered married without a legal contract or public celebration¹³⁶. Virgil's love story between Aeneas and Dido, in *Aeneid 4*, depicts a clear picture of one woman's intention of marriage not reciprocated by the groom. While Dido views her union with Aeneas as a marriage, Aeneas views their relationship as an intimate rendezvous. Although there was no exchange of vows or a legal contract, it can be argued that Dido was not completely wrong when she believed the events in the cave were a marriage. It had certain

¹³⁵ D'Ambra 2007: 75.

¹³⁶ Crook 1967:101.

similarities to a typical Roman wedding. For instance, the lightning (*ignes*) represents the wedding torches (*taedae*). Juno presides over the wedding and is described as the *pronuba*, the matron who joins the hands of the bride and groom at the wedding¹³⁷. When the *pronuba* took the right hand of the bride and placed it on the right hand of the groom, this was the *dextrarum iunctio*, most solemn moment of the ceremony when the couple exchanged vows and promised mutual love and devotion to each other¹³⁸. Virgil even describes the events and claims:

Neque enim specie famave movetur
Nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem:
Coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam. 4.170-2

Neither even is Dido moved by appearances or by her reputation nor at this time does she meditate any longer on a secret love: she calls it marriage, she cloaks her guilt with this name.

Dido, rightfully, believes they are married, and this marriage takes place without the exchange of formal vows or legal ceremonies. It is based purely on their intent to become husband and wife.

While this type of marriage can exist in some cases, in most circumstances weddings were marked by white dresses, processions, wedding feasts, and ceremonies. There were several outward displays in which couples would prove the legitimacy of the wedding: the betrothal, the actual marriage ceremony, and the exchange of a dowry¹³⁹. Betrothal in infancy sometimes happened, but as a general rule it took place when the woman was able to understand the type of union she was entering into. The engagement was sealed with a kiss and the man placed an iron

¹³⁷ Virgil 4.165-72; Paoli 1958: 116-7

¹³⁸ Paoli 1958: 117.

¹³⁹ Crook 1967: 103.

ring on the third finger of his fiancée's left hand, much like in modern marriages¹⁴⁰. Once the couple was engaged, the bride began the process of picking a date for the wedding. Unlike modern brides who worry about venue availability, ancient brides worked around superstitions and religious celebrations. For example, the Kalends, Nones, and Ides of each month were strictly off limits. Most of May and the first half of June were barred as well. In fact, nearly one-third of every year was unlucky¹⁴¹. Therefore, brides were forced to pay special attention to the date of the marriage in order to avoid its being shrouded by superstition and an unlucky beginning.

There were two types of marriage ceremonies: marriage by *conventio in manum*, and marriage *sine manu*¹⁴². Marriage by *conventio in manum* was the more ancient form, in which the bride came into the hand of her father's family and was subject to his *patria potestas*¹⁴³. She passed out of the authority of her father and pledged submission to her husband; in a way, changing one family for another. This was both a sacrificial and symbolic act, for the house was a residence for the divine members of the house, as well as the human members. Each house contained its own divine status called *sacra*, the worship of household spirits, ancestors, and any other cults attached to the family. Therefore, disrupting this balance was a delicate act that meant strain on the divine and human members. While the human member brought in the spouse, the divine members must accept her. The bride, likewise, must be willing to partake in her new home's *sacra*¹⁴⁴. This bond was formed in

¹⁴⁰ Baldson 1962: 177-8.

¹⁴¹ Johnson 1957:132.

¹⁴² Baldson 1962: 179-81; Bardis 1963: 226-9; Folwer 1909: 136; Paoli 1958: 114-7.

¹⁴³ Paoli 1958: 114-5.

¹⁴⁴ Folwer 1909: 136.

three types of *manus* weddings. First, the sacred rite of *confarreatio*, named after the spelt cake (*libum farreum*) shared by the couple during the ceremony¹⁴⁵. Originally found only in patrician families, *confarreatio* was an ancient rite that bound the couple in matrimony for lifetime. It was the most picturesque, for the Priest of Jupiter (*Flamen Dialis*) and Pontifex Maximus presided over the event. It was also the wedding ceremony shared by the *Flamen Dialis* and the *Flaminica Dialis*, who served jointly as the Priests of Jupiter and were the epitome of a prudent marriage. As a tradition, the new couple sat veiled on two adjacent chairs, over which the skin of a sacrificed animal was stretched. The pair then walked around the altar proceeded by a servant (*camillius*) holding the sacred vessels¹⁴⁶. *Confarreatio* was celebrated by only the elite few and its connection to the Priest of Jupiter reflected that the marriage was sacred and fruitful.

The other two types of *manus* ceremony, although reflecting less religious tradition or symbolism, were nonetheless respected and legal ceremonies. *Coemptio* was a primitive bride-purchase, originally genuine, later a symbolic one in which the father demonstrated his legal power over his daughter. In the presence of witnesses, the groom paid a penny to the father in exchange for the bride¹⁴⁷. The last type of marriage by *conventio in manum* was *usus*, the uninterrupted cohabitation of the couple for longer than a year. While this sounds ideal for a man who wants to avoid the stress of a wedding or official commitment, it must have involved some declaration of honorable intentions, for otherwise, there would be no way to

¹⁴⁵ Paolo 1958: 115.

¹⁴⁶ Baldson 1962:180-1; Paoli 1958: 117.

¹⁴⁷ Baldson 1962: 179; Paoli 1958: 115.

distinguish between a man's wife and concubine¹⁴⁸. The concepts of misogamy and concubines are a grey area within the realm of Roman marriages. Gaius states: "the same woman cannot be married to two men, nor the same man have two wives" (Gai. *Inst.* 1.183)¹⁴⁹. But, once again, the status of marriage comes down to intent. A man could not legally marry two women, but if there was not intent of marriage, it does not mean they could not live together as something else. She could become his concubine. Cicero records a situation in which a man left his legally married wife in Spain and married another in Rome. In this situation, there was debate about whether there was an automatic divorce of the first wife, or if the second wife was merely a concubine¹⁵⁰. Gellius claims that the word *paelex* was the ancient name for a woman who cohabitated with a man who was *in manu* with another woman¹⁵¹. Despite the doubts as to whether a man could legally have relations with multiple women, it remains that he could only be *in manu* with one woman. During the traditional *manus* ceremony, it is often suggested by scholars that the bride uttered the ritual words, *ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia* ("where you are male, I am female"), before her hand was placed in the right hand of her new husband. In this simple statement, she declared herself the wife of her husband and evoked a union of two halves¹⁵².

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Crook 1967:101.

¹⁵⁰ Cic. *De Orat.* 1. 183.

¹⁵¹ Gel. *NA*: 4.3.3.

¹⁵² D'Ambra 2007: 75.

By as early as the third century B.C., free marriage (*sine manu*) became the primary practice for couples¹⁵³. The wife continued to belong to her father's family and remained under the control of his *potestas*. She even retained her right of inheritance. This was not a formal marriage, but depended on cohabitation. If a husband wished to annul the marriage, he merely had to separate from his female roommate and send a slave, or personally, tell her to "take back what is yours" (*tuas res tibi habeto*)¹⁵⁴.

Regardless of which type of marriage the couple entered, the wedding was still a special day for the bride. It marked her transition from young woman to mature wife. This new phase of life was represented in the clothes she wore on her wedding day. The night before her wedding, she surrendered her childhood toys and *toga praetexta*, dedicated them to her household gods, and put on her ceremonial costume, consisting of the *seni crines* hairstyle, *flammeum* veil, and a *tunica recta*¹⁵⁵. Together, these components demonstrated her purity and devotion to her new family and husband, as well as her transition into the next phase of life.

The Seni Crines and Flammeum

The hairstyle of Roman brides, while recognized as a distinct hairstyle, is rarely visible in artistic representations or discussed in detail in literature. However, Plautus notes at two different passages that brides wore a coiffure different than Roman *matronae*. First, in *Mostellaria* he states: *solī gerundum censeo morem et capiundas crines* ("The thing to do is to humor him, and to fix up your hair for the

¹⁵³ Baldson 1962: 180.

¹⁵⁴ Paoli 1958: 115; Pliny *Epist.* 3.4.

¹⁵⁵ Baldson 1962: 182.

wedding”)¹⁵⁶. Then in *Miles Gloriosus*, in Plautus’ dialogue between Palaestrio, Periplectomenus, and Pleusicles, the cunning slave devises a plan to expose the braggart: *ut ad te eam iam deducas domum itaque eam huc ornatam adducas, ex matronarum modo, capite compto, crinis vittasque habeat, adsimuletque se tuam esse uxorem* (“You take her from your house at once, and then bring her back here, from the way of *matronae*, the adorned head, and hair done in ribbons, and she should pretend to be your wife” (790-93))¹⁵⁷. La Follette suggests that he is drawing a distinction between the coiffure of a bride and the headdress of a typical *matrona*¹⁵⁸. Unfortunately, the distinction between the two hairstyles is not clear. He does insinuate that the hair of the *matrona* was piled high on her hair, suggesting the traditional *tutulus* hairstyle of the *materfamilias*¹⁵⁹. Fortunately, Festus sheds some light on this subject by explicitly stating that brides donned the *seni crines*, the hairstyle of the Vestal Virgins, and draws a connection between the hairstyle and chastity, for the Vestals represented perpetual chastity. He states:

senis crinibus nubentes ornantur, quod [h]is ornatus vetustissimus fuit. Quidam quod eo Vestales virgines ornentur, quarum castitatem viris suis †sponoe *** a ceteris...(454L).

Brides are adorned with the *seni crines*, because this was the most ancient style for them. Moreover [brides wear the *seni crines*] because the Vestal Virgins are adorned with it, whose chastity for their own husbands †brides *** from others...¹⁶⁰.

¹⁵⁶ Plaut. *Most.* 226. Translated by LaFollette.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Olson 2008: 40.

¹⁶⁰ Translation by DiLuzio.

Festus reveals that the brides adopted this ancient tradition as a symbol of chastity and purity before marriage. Like the Vestals, brides were expected to remain chaste before marriage. By wearing the *seni crines*, the bride draws subtle attention to her purity.

However, Festus does not expand on the subject or hint at what the *seni crines* looked like. Traditionally, it is believed that the *seni crines* was constructed out of six braids and was achieved by parting the hair in the middle using a *hasta caelibaris* (celibate spear). In his *Quaestiones Romanae*, Plutarch draws attention to this bizarre and misunderstood practice by asking this simple question: “Why do they part the hair of brides with the point of a spear”? Does that symbolize the first Roman wives won by violent wars? Should brides strive to mate with warlike men? Does it hint that their marriage can be separated by steel alone? Lastly, he asks if the presence of a spear shares a connection to Juno, for the spear is commonly associated with Juno and she is often depicted with a spear¹⁶¹. Festus offers similar explanations for this practice:

1. In the same way the spear has been joined with the gladiator’s body, the bride would be joined with her husband
2. Because matrons are under the tutelage of Juno Curitis, who is so called from the spear carried [by her image], which is called in the language of the Sabines *curis*.
3. Because the spear predicts that the brides will bring forth brave men
4. Because by nuptial law, the bride is subjected to the command of her husband and the spear is chosen because it is most important of the weapons and [is a symbol] of power. (Festus 55.3 L)¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Plut. *Rom. Quae*. 87.

¹⁶² Translation by La Follette 60.

Modern scholars interpret this unique feature as symbolizing everything from conjuring the bride's fertility to bringing out the evil spirits in her hair¹⁶³. It is even suggested that the *hasta caelibaris* was a hairpin or even a hair hook used to thread ornaments throughout the hair as it was being braided¹⁶⁴. Cary and Nock suggest that spears in ancient Rome were an object of both usefulness and power. While they were used on the battlefield or in the arenas to protect man and country, iron swords and spears also played a role in ancient superstition. They note that in numerous instances iron was taboo in Greek and Roman sanctuaries and in one case, the sacrifices offered by the Arval Brothers *ob ferrum inlatum in aedem scripturae causa* ("on account of the iron having been brought into the sanctuary for the sake of scriptures"). On the other hand, an interesting case was recorded in the Christian community of Miletus, which exorcized the evil demons by nailing a cross made of iron¹⁶⁵. Thus, the use of a spear in preparation for marriage could serve as a superstitious ritual expelling the evil spirits from the bride in order to wish her a prosperous marriage. In addition, it is argued that the process of dividing the hair with a *hasta caelibaris* pays tribute to the Sabine Women, the first wives of Rome who were forcibly taken from their homes. It demonstrates that the first marriages were a product of violence and force and implies the husband's dominance over his wife¹⁶⁶.

After parting the hair with a *hasta caelibaris*, information regarding the construction and appearance of the *seni crines* become ambiguous. There is little

¹⁶³ Baldson 1962: 182-3; La Follette 60; Olson 2008: 24.

¹⁶⁴ La Follette 1994: 60.

¹⁶⁵ Cary and Nock 1927: 4-5.

¹⁶⁶ Baldson 1962: 183; D'Ambra 2007: 74.

literary evidence describing the *seni crines* and even fewer artistic depictions of brides without their veil. However, based off the etymology of the word *seni*, commonly interpreted to mean the number *sex* (six), it is believed that the hairstyle consists of six braids twisted and bound by woolen fillets¹⁶⁷. Since rich, orate hair symbolized female sexuality, it is not surprising that the bridal coiffure was heavily veiled and bound out of modesty¹⁶⁸. Furthermore, Juvenal notes that it was unnatural for a bride to adorn herself with heavy makeup and frivolous expenditures. He states:

Interea foeda aspectu ridendaque multo
Pane tumet facies aut pingua Poppaeana
Spirat et hinc miseri uiscantur labra mariti.
Ad moechum lota ueniunt cute.

Meanwhile, her foul face, laughable in appearance, is puffed up with much dough or breaths rich Poppaeian creams and for this reason the lips of her miserable husband are made sticky. To their lover they come with clean skin (Juvenal, *Satire* 6. 460-64).

While jewels and cosmetics may seem innocent to the modern bride, to the ancient satirist they implied the evils of wealth and fear of future immorality. The fraudulent nature of her appearance could hint at her impiety and willingness to partake in adulterous activities¹⁶⁹. Therefore, nothing on the bride would have been ostentatious. Instead, she would want to project the image of modesty and prudence.

¹⁶⁷ La Follette 1994: 57; Olson 2008: 22. Wilson 1938: 140.

¹⁶⁸ D'Ambra 2007: 74.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 48.

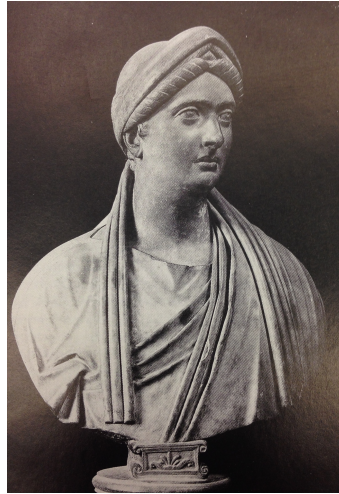


Figure 20¹⁷⁰
Uffizi Bust



Figure 21¹⁷¹

Janet Stephens, a hairdresser and “hair archeologist” attempts to reconstruct the *seni crines* using the Uffizi Vestal bust and asserts that the hairstyle was achieved by dividing the hair into six sections using the *hasta caelibaris*, and each section was braided into a total of six braids. The hair is then wrapped around the base of the bride’s head and tied in a series of square knots at the top of the forehead¹⁷² (figure 20). However, Stephens’ suggestion that a seventh braid is constructed from the ends of the braided hair in order to create a roll at the top of the forehead is rejected by Meghan DiLuzio and Molly Lindner. They argue that the bun merely supports the headdress and prevents the *vittae* from falling over the bride’s forehead. Therefore, the seventh braid is a part of the headdress, not an aspect of the *seni crines*¹⁷³. After her hair was dressed, a wreath of “flowers, *verbenae*, and herbs she picked herself”

¹⁷⁰ La Follette 1994: 59; Fig. 3.5.

¹⁷¹ Olson 2008: 24; Fig. 1.7.

¹⁷² Stephens 2013, January 4.

¹⁷³ DiLuzio 13.

was placed beneath her *flammeum*¹⁷⁴. According to Festus, the bridal wreath contained *verbenae*, a leafy twig used in religious ceremonies, but Catullus claims *amaracum* (marjoram), a flower closely associated with Venus, was often present as well¹⁷⁵. Thus, because of its relationship with Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, the wreath symbolizes fertility and prospects of an abundant and fruitful marriage.

The *flammeum* veil was then placed on top of the bride's hair (figure 21). The top edge of the veil rested on the woman's head and was pulled down to hide her face, while the back of her dress was covered almost entirely by the material¹⁷⁶. According to Lucan, the veil's purpose was to slightly shield the bride's face from her husband, and protect her modesty, thus indicating that the veil could be transparent¹⁷⁷. Both ancient texts and artistic representations assert that the veil was the most important part of the bride's costume¹⁷⁸. It was an indispensable part of the upper-middle class ceremony, as the wedding itself was referred to by the phrase *flammeum sumit* in several different places¹⁷⁹. Festus links the Latin verb *nubere* ("to be married") with the Latin noun *nubes* (cloud), to illustrate that the Romans believe brides should be "clouded over with the veil": nuptials are so called because the head of the bride is wrapped around with the bridal veil, which the ancients called 'to cloud over' or 'veil'¹⁸⁰. While the importance of the *flammeum* is

¹⁷⁴ Festus 56.1 L; La Follette 1994: 56.

¹⁷⁵ La Follette 1994: 56.

¹⁷⁶ Croom 2002: 112.

¹⁷⁷ Luc. *Phars.* 2.360-1: *non timidum nuptae leuiter tectura pudorem lutea demissos uelantur flammea voltus* ("No yellow *flammeum*, lightly covering the down-gazed modesty of the bride, veiled her timid face").

¹⁷⁸ La Follette 1994: 55; Olson 2008; Wilson 1938: 141.

¹⁷⁹ Juv. 2.124 and 6.225; Olson 2008: 22.

¹⁸⁰ La Follette 1994: 55; Paoli 1958: 116.

noted, the color of this sacred veil is misunderstood and frequently debated. Ancient authors describe the veil as *luteus*, but the exact shade of this color is vague. Ancient authors have described it as a spectrum of hues, ranging from red to a deep yellow color. Llewellyn-Jones, in his analysis of Roman colors, states that because of ancient vagueness, “the study of abstract hues is frustrating and confusing, although an investigation into the symbolism of the colour of a particular item can be more rewarding and enlightening”¹⁸¹. Furthermore he notes both that the perception of the color could change according to “the need for meaning” and that the dyed hues could change shade depending on the lighting or angle of the viewer¹⁸². With that being said, it is necessary to look to ancient sources for some clarification on the shade of *luteus* and attempt to draw symbolic meaning from the evidence presented.

First, Pliny the Elder refers to the bridal veil as *luteus* (yellow), stating “I understand that yellow was the earliest color to be highly esteemed and was granted as an exclusive privilege to women for their bridal veils” (*H.N.* 21.46)¹⁸³. Pliny later uses the same word, *luteum*, to refer to an egg yolk: “the chick itself is formed out of the white of the egg, but its food is in the yolk (*luteum*)” (*H.N.* 10.148)¹⁸⁴. Similarly, Festus describes the *flammeum* as the color of lightning (92L), suggesting that the color could have ranged from a bright yellow to deep yellow, or even on the verge of red. However, the etymology of the word *flammeum* creates a discrepancy in rendering the color as yellow, for it is cognate with the adjective fiery or flame-like. These adjectives insinuate that the veil should range from orange to

¹⁸¹ Llewellyn-Jones 2003: 225.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Translation by La Follette (1994).

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

red. This is argued in a passage in Gellius, in which he placed *luteum* with yellowish colors as well as with reds: *fulvus enim et flavus et rubidus et poeniceus et rutilus et luteus et spadix appellationes sunt rufi coloris* (N.A. 2.26.8)¹⁸⁵. Later, Gellius adds *luteus contra rufus color est dilutior* (the color *luteum* is more dilute than *rufus* (N.A. 2.26. 14)). This suggests that the color is almost pinkish, a lighter shade of red.

Robert Edgeworth, in his analysis of the color refers to a passage by Catullus, which he believes give strong evidence that *luteum* can refer to the color pink. In his description of the bride's changing complexion on her wedding day, Catullus notes that she is described as *alba parthenice velut luteumve papaver* (like a white flower or a yellow poppy (Cat. 61. 187-8))¹⁸⁶. But, what color is the bride's face on her wedding day? According to Edgeworth, there are three options: yellow, red (pink), or pale. For instance, the bride could have been yellowish, temporarily jaundiced or queasy, or pale, nervous about her new future. In either case, he references multiple instances where ancient authors use the word *alba* or *luteum* to refer to something either pale or yellowish. Yet, he believes pink is the more appropriate description of a bride because it alludes to her blushing, hence the cliché "blushing bride"¹⁸⁷.

However, most modern historians reject this argument and agree that the color *luteum* most likely means a dark shade of yellow or saffron, possibly because of the connection between flames and wedding ceremonies¹⁸⁸. One might recall the peculiar mention of flames in the so-called marriage between Dido and Aeneid. In

¹⁸⁵ Translation: for *fulvus, flavus, rubidus, poeniceus, rutilus, luteus, spadix appellationes* are called red colors. The exact color cannot be translated. They merely indicate colors in the red spectrum.

¹⁸⁶ Edgeworth 1985: 213

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 214-5.

¹⁸⁸ La Follette 1994: 55; Olson 2008:22; Wilson 1938 141.

Virgil's description of the event he states, *fulgere ignes et conscius aether conubiis summoque ulularunt vertice Nymphae* (4.167-8)¹⁸⁹. As previously mentioned, the *fulgere ignes* could take the place of the torches present at traditional procession. Several wedding torches customarily preceded the wedding procession, which symbolized her departure from her father's home and entrance into her husband's household. One torch in particular was comprised of a bundle of white pine in honor of Ceres, the goddess of the fertile earth, and the Sabine women, whose abduction was illuminated by the same torches¹⁹⁰. La Follette even suggests that the connection between the Latin word *flamma* (flame) and *flammeum* may have been a symbol of the life-giving flame of the hearth, which was tended by the bride in her new home¹⁹¹.

Nevertheless, the symbolic significance behind bride's wearing the *flammeum* is easily understood through Festus, who, at two different occasions explicitly states that bride wore the same sheer, yellow veil as the *Flaminica Dialis*, the Roman priestess who was the epitome of a long-lasting marriage. Festus writes: *flammeo vestimento flaminica utebatur, id est Dialis uxor et Iovis sacerdos, cui telum fulminis eodem erat* ("the Flaminica, she is the wife of the *Dialis* and priest of Jupiter, wore the *flammeum* garment, of which is the same color of lightening" (92.32-3 L)¹⁹². Festus elaborates by saying, *flammeo amicitur nubens ominis boni causa, quod eo assidue utebatur flaminica, id est flaminis uxor, cui non licebat facere divortium* ("a

¹⁸⁹ Translation: flashing light and heaven as a witness to the marriage and Nymphs howl from high summits.

¹⁹⁰ D'Ambra 2007: 76. Also see Baldson and La Follette for more references to the wedding torches.

¹⁹¹ La Follette 1994: 56.

¹⁹² Translation by La Follette.

bride is wrapped in the *flammeum* as a good omen, because the *Flaminica*, who is the wife of the *flamen* (priest of Jupiter), to whom divorce was not permitted, used to wear it constantly” (89.37-9 L). There is undoubtedly a strong connection between a bride and the *Flaminica*, starting with her association with everlasting marriage. The *Flaminica*, as stated above, was bound to her husband (the *flamen*) though a ritual wedding ceremony referred to as *confarreatio*. As Gellius states, the marriage of the *flamen* could not be dissolved except by death (*matrimonium flamines nisi morte dirimi ius non est*. (N.A. 10.15.23). For his position as the Priest of Jupiter did not just belong to him, but also his wife¹⁹³. Therefore, by association with the *Flaminica*, the most faithful wife, a bride wore the *flammeum* as a symbol of constancy and fidelity¹⁹⁴.

The Tunica Recta

Much like modern brides, ancient brides paid special attention to the wedding dress. However, the Roman bride wove her own dress and slept in it the night before her wedding. Ritual required that the bride weave her dress, and the *flammeum*, on an upright loom, the oldest kind of loom¹⁹⁵. This tradition serves to demonstrate that she was accomplished in the art of weaving, which was necessary for a wife because it would soon be her duty to provide clothes for her family¹⁹⁶. Pliny the Elder writes that the upright loom was first used by Tanaquil, wife of Tarquinius Priscus, who wove the earliest *tunica recta* and was known for her

¹⁹³ DiLuzio (forthcoming).

¹⁹⁴ Olson 2008: 22.

¹⁹⁵ Sebesta 1994: 48.

¹⁹⁶ La Follette 1994: 54; Olson 2008: 21; Sebesta 1994: 48.

thriftiness and housewife skills (Plin. *Nat.* 8.194)¹⁹⁷. This loom produced a much wider piece of cloth and a much fuller garment, thus creating a more modest and conservative dress for the bride on her wedding day¹⁹⁸ The weaving of the bridal dress on an upright loom not only symbolic of her wifely skills, it is also considered a good omen, much like the *toga virilis* of young boys. Festus notes that comparison by stating:

On the eve of their wedding day, for good luck, maidens go to bed dressed in royal white tunics and yellow hairnets, both woven (by them) standing in front of the upright loom, just as in the custom also in the giving of the *toga virilis* (to boys). (Festus 364.21 L)¹⁹⁹

Both the *toga virilis* and *tunica recta* mark a transition in the adolescent's life. In the case of a young boy, the *toga virilis* was presented to him as a symbol of freeing him from his father's control. In a way, it represented his newly-gained manhood²⁰⁰. Similarly, a young woman's *tunica recta* represented her transition into womanhood. She departed from her father's home, entered a new life, and came under the control of her husband. She was no longer perceived as a daughter, but a wife.

Furthermore, the dress was woven with white wool, ritually used for religious garments, as white was the color associated with the gods, consecration, and purity²⁰¹. Similar to illustrating her chastity through the color of her dress, the binding of her tunic with a traditional belt (*cingulum*), typically made from the

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ La Follette 1994: 55.

¹⁹⁹ Translation by La Follette 1994.

²⁰⁰ Stone 1994: 39.

²⁰¹ Sebesta 1994: 48.

fleece of an ewe, was symbolic to “locking up” her chastity. The wool was intertwined into one cord to represent her mixing and binding herself to her husband²⁰². The cord was then cinched and tied with a *Herculaneus* knot, which her husband untied after the wedding festivities when the bride and groom reclined on their marriage bed. This knot was made by doubling one end of the cord into a loop and then feeding the end into the loop, around the double cord, and then out the loop again. Considered a hard knot to untie, it referred to the strength and reproductive power of Hercules, who had many children²⁰³. In more than one aspect, the dress represented her purity, chastity, and transition into her new phase of life.

Conclusion

Much like the costume of a modern bride, the wedding dress and veil of a Roman bride had deeply rooted tradition and symbolism. Her *seni crines* hairstyle, shared with the Vestal Virgins, hinted at her purity and chastity before marriage, and the societal expectation to commit herself to one man. Similarly, the *flammeum* veil, which covered her head and shielded her face, accentuated her modesty and undoubtedly associates her with the *Flaminica*, priestess and wife of the *Flamen* Dialis who also wore the *flammeum*. The *Flaminica* was a unique priestess, not only because she held a position along side her husband, but because she represented a devout wife and unending marriage. Bound by the sacred *confarreatio* wedding ceremony, the couple was not permitted to divorce. By wearing the same veil as the

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ La Follette 1994: 55; Olson 2008: 21; Sebesta 1994: 48; Wilson 1939: 138.

Flaminica, a bride's costume symbolized the hope for a fruitful and consistent marriage. It is interesting to note that the bride shares aspects of two divine and sacred women, perhaps hinting at her purity and innocence. Before marriage, she is an innocent young girl protected by her apotropaic *toga* and *lunula*; however, at this point she is entering maturity and adulthood. Thus, her bridal attire symbolizes her transition into the next phase of life. The transition into becoming a wife and homemaker is also present in her costume, particularly in her dress. The *tunica recta* was woven by the bride before her marriage to show off her weaving skills and demonstrate her ability to provide domestically for her family. When worn together, the components of her costume symbolized the idealist qualities of both a young girl and future *matrona*: chastity and purity before marriage, and modesty and faithfulness during marriage.

CHAPTER FOUR

Dress of the Vestal Virgins

Extending from the Temple of Vesta and situated between the Via Sacra and Via Nova below the northern slope of the Palatine Hill, the Atrium Vestae, or residence of the Vestal Virgins, can be seen in excavations of the Forum Romanum today. The expansive layout, furnished with clustered rooms and colonnaded courtyards, as well as fragments of colored marble, suggests that the Atrium Vestae was a luxurious space occupied by women of importance. Along the back of the courtyard stand life-size portrait statues of the *Virgines Vestales Maximae* on inscribed pedestals²⁰⁴. Who were the Vestal Virgins, worthy of lavish living quarters, prime real estate, and ornately detailed sculptures? The Vestal Virgins were Rome's "most extraordinary religious phenomenon"²⁰⁵. They were the devoted priestesses of Vesta, entrusted with the responsibility of tending the sacred flame that represented the goddess and preparing the *mola salsa* used in sacrificial rites, as well as a living, breathing representation of the purity and sacrosanctity of Rome.

The costume of the Vestal included the *seni crines* hairstyle, a headdress of composed of the *infula* and *vittae* (wool bands), a veil known as the *suffibulum*, a *palla*, and a *stola* or *tunica*. The different aspects of the Vestal Virgin's costume reflect her position as both a priestess and ideal symbol of the Roman State. Because her costume does not conform to the appearances of other Roman women, it

²⁰⁴ Thompson 2005: 21-23.

²⁰⁵ Staples 1998: 129.

emphasizes her unique position as an outsider in the community. She is neither a bride on the cusp of marriage nor a matron fulfilling her household duties, but her costume incorporates aspects of both wardrobes. For instance, the Vestals don the *seni crines*, the hairstyle of a bride, as an expression of their virginity and reserved chastity; the *stola* is a reflection of the matron's garb. Analyzing the costume of the Vestals is crucial in understanding their role in society. By not conforming to the appearances of Roman women, a Vestal's image emphasizes her role as a sacred and unordinary woman and projects a sense of social oddity: not fitting into the mold of the political Roman class structure.

The Vestals' origin gives insight into their unique position and the importance of their self-presentation. Vesta, the divine protector of the household fire, and her priestesses had been present in Roman history since before the foundation of Rome by Romulus. According to legend, when fleeing from the burning city of Troy, Aeneas carried with him the sacred fire of Vesta, the *penates*, and a wooden image of Athena²⁰⁶. Aeneas not only brought the worship of Vesta to Latium, but also the concept of an eternal flame as the symbol of perseverance and prosperity. Likewise, descriptions and accounts of Vestal Virgins have appeared in literary accounts of the time before Rome's founding, starting with the legend of Romulus and Remus. According to Livy, Rhea Silvia, a Vestal Virgin and granddaughter of Aeneas' son Ascanius, was ravished by the god Mars and bore twin sons²⁰⁷. Rhea Silvia's status as a Vestal reveals the existence of the Cult of Vesta and the position of the Vestals in Alba Longa well before the establishment of Rome.

²⁰⁶ Virgil: 2.368-75.

²⁰⁷ Livy: 1. 3-4.

Joanne Thompson argues that, as a descendant of Ascanius, Romulus established the Cult of Vesta in Rome because of his connection with the eternal flame brought from Troy, although Numa Pompilius was credited for creating the public religion and cult practices²⁰⁸.

Despite their origins being shrouded in legend, the duty and influence of the Vestal Virgins on Roman culture remains certain: they were an integral part of Roman society as both priestesses of Vesta and as living representations of the Roman state. As a symbol of Rome, their conduct was watched as if under a microscope and they were often subject to persecution based on the current political state of Rome. For instance, after the devastating annihilation of the Roman Army at Cannae by Hannibal, two Vestals, Opimia and Floronia, were punished for *incestum* (unchastity). Emotional chaos and panic ravaged the state. Looking for someone to blame for their defeat, the people blamed the supposed impurity of Opimia and Floronia for their misfortune. Both women were tried by the state: one committed suicide, and the other was buried alive in the traditional fashion²⁰⁹.

Ariadne Staples argues that both a chaste Vestal Virgin and a Vestal who lost her virginity were vital for the welfare of the state. If the state was in trouble, it was believed that the persecution and execution of an unchaste Vestal would restore the balance. Similarly, if the Vestals upheld their vow, the state would be prosperous and peaceful. Thus, the sexuality of the Vestals was inseparable from the

²⁰⁸ Thompson 2005: 29; Livy: 1.20; Plutarch *Vit. Rom.* 3-29.

²⁰⁹ Staples 1998: 136.

welfare of the state²¹⁰. They were expected to keep their vows of chastity and protect the sacred flame of Vesta in order to insure the prosperity of Rome.

The Vestals' role as a symbol of the integrity of the Roman state, protectors of the realm, and women set them apart in the Roman social order. They were neither typical matrons nor male citizens, but instead lie in between the two classes. While their duty of making the *mola salsa* and guarding the sacred flame closely resembles the duty of the *materfamilias*, who was responsible for tending the household hearth, the Vestals' oath of celibacy and absence of procreation made them outsiders to the social expectations of Roman matrons. Likewise, being women, they were outside the social roles of male citizens, despite their elevated rank²¹¹. The Vestals' unique position in society, both as a symbol of the integrity of Rome and the protectors of the realm, is undeniably represented in their appearance.

Thus, as a symbol of morality, the dress and adornment of the Vestals was often a public concern, much like their protected chastity. Livy recalls several occasions where the Vestals' appearance came under the scrutiny of the state. In one instance, the Vestal Postumia in 420 B.C. was accused of *incestum* on the basis that she dressed "more elegant and [her] demeanor freer than befitted a Vestal". Although she was acquitted of the charges, she was ordered by the *pontifex maximus* "to refrain from levity and to dress in a more religious and less studied manner"²¹². Roughly a century later, the Vestal Minicia attracted unwanted attention for dressing more lavishly than her position required. Unlike Postumia, she was

²¹⁰ Celia E. Schultz argues that the Vestal Virgins were entrusted to maintain the relationship between the gods and mortals. Also see Staples 1998: 137.

²¹¹ Beard 1980: 13-17; Thompson 2005: 32; Takács 2008: 80-81.

²¹² Livy 4.44.

convicted and buried alive near the Colline Gate for her *incestum*²¹³. The presentation of the Vestals was a matter of public concern, and straying from the norm was a matter of life and death. Like the particular dress of political offices, the dress of the Vestals was a visual reminder of their importance within the state²¹⁴.

The Seni Crines and Suffibulum

The hairstyle of the Vestals is recognized as a distinct coiffure in which the hair is divided into six braided tresses, known as the *seni crines*. The term *seni* is most commonly interpreted to mean the number *sex* (six) and defines the hairstyle as one containing six braids²¹⁵. Although La Follette notes two alternative interpretations, which suggest that the term *seni* to have meant “twisted and bound” or “cut”, she rejects these interpretations and supports the theory that *seni* refers to the number. She cites a previously unnoticed passage in Martial, which she renders as: “I saw them, Vacerra, I saw those bags they would not hold as payment for the two years’ worth of rent: you redheaded wife, the one with the seven-tressed hair, walked off with them” (12.32.2-4). She argues that Martial is depicting an image of an unfaithful wife, drawing on the idea that an irregular bridal hairstyle with seven braids instead of six signifies an unfaithful wife. Therefore, she concludes that the term *seni* in this context must refer to the number six, and that rendering it as

²¹³ Livy 8.15; Plutarch *Num.* 10 discusses the act of burying Vestals near the Colline Gate as adequate punishment for a Vestal who committed *incestum*.

²¹⁴ See Sebesta and Bonfante 1994 for implications of the importance of dress as a visual representation of status for both men and women. Also see Stone 1994 for the different uses of togas.

²¹⁵ DiLuzio 3; La Follette 1994: 57.

“twisted and bound” or “cut” would be incorrect²¹⁶. While the significance of the number six remains uncertain, many scholars argue that the number six refers to the number of Vestals required to hold the position at all times²¹⁷. Six Vestals were chosen as children between the ages of six and ten to serve Vesta. Not every father could offer his daughter into the pool of potential Vestals; she must have two living parents, be of good health and under the control of a *paterfamilias*, and be the daughter of a free Roman citizen. After thirty years of service to Vesta, the Vestal was free to leave the order and marry, although few did²¹⁸.

The *seni crines* of the Vestals is reminiscent of the hairstyle worn by Roman brides. Festus, in a fragmentary passage, draws a connection between their hairstyle and chastity by stating that:

senis crinibus nubentes ornantur, quod [h]is ornatus vetustissimus fuit. Quidam quod eo Vestales virgines ornentur, quarum castitatem viris suis †sponoe *** a ceteris...(454L).

Brides are adorned with the *seni crines*, because this was the most ancient style for them. Moreover [brides wear the *seni crines*] because the Vestal Virgins are adorned with it, whose chastity for their own husbands †brides *** from others...²¹⁹

Festus reveals that the *seni crines* of the Vestals was an ancient tradition, and brides adopted the hairstyle as a symbol of the chastity and purity before marriage. Both wearers had to be virgins, yet were associated with prosperity in different ways: the bride was the bearer of life in marriage, and the Vestals were the protectors of life in

²¹⁶La Follette 1994: 57.

²¹⁷ The idea that the number of braids refers to the number of Vestals is noted in multiple sources, see La Follette 1994: 57, DiLuzio (forthcoming): 3.

²¹⁸ Dio 55.22.5; Aul Gell. *A.N.* 1.12; Gardner 1991: 25.

²¹⁹ Translation by DiLuzio

Rome, through their strong connection with the well-being of the state. In one interpretation, the Vestals were even considered the brides of Rome through their connection with the *pontifex maximus*. Similarly, the so-called *captio* ceremony, in which the Vestal-elect, wearing the *seni crines*, was initiated into the college by the *pontifex maximus*, parallels the marriage ceremony of a new bride. Gellius affirms that as the Vestal-elect passes from the control of her father and is delivered to the college, the *pontifex maximus* utters the words, *ita te amata captio* (“thus I take you, loved one”)²²⁰. The language of the ceremony suggests that the Vestal enters into a “marriage” with the *pontifex maximus*²²¹. However, it is important to understand that the Vestal was never under the guardianship of the chief priest. The Vestal was free from the continual chain of *patria potestas*, and was never under the same control as that of a father or husband²²². Despite the inaccurate description of the *captio* ceremony as an official marriage between the Vestal and chief priest, there is a clear symbolic connection between the *seni crines* of a bride and the *seni crines* of the Vestals. Both wearers are distinguished by their virginity. While a bride is expected to remain a virgin until marriage, a Vestal is required to remain a virgin while she serves the State. Holt Parker argues that the perpetual virginity of the Vestals again symbolizes the invincibility of Rome. Just as her religious duties of tending the hearth of Rome represented the enduring prosperity of the state itself, her pure body was a metaphor for the unbreachable walls of Rome²²³. Furthermore, by wearing bridal *seni crines*, the Vestals subtly draw attention to their interstitial

²²⁰ Aul Gell. *AN*. 1.12.13-14.

²²¹ Beard 1980: 15; Staples 1998: 140.

²²² Thompson 2005: 33; Gardner 1991: 24-26; Staples 1998: 140-41.

²²³ Parker 2004: 568.

status as neither a bride nor matron. Like a young girl on her wedding day, she is on the brink between virginal and marital status, but as a Vestal bound by chastity, she is perpetually on that brink²²⁴. She is fixed in a state of transition between bride and matron. Given this connection to the prosperity of the state and “in between” status, it is not surprising that her chastity is represented by her attire. And it is, therefore, less surprising that Vestals such as Postumia and Minicia were then chastised for going against the precedence of the costume.

While the symbolic implications are noted by Festus, he does not go into detail on how the hairstyle is achieved. Because both brides and Vestals are heavily veiled in visual depictions, it is hard to uncover the details of the coiffure. A bride’s head is usually shown wearing the veil of the *flaminica Dialis*, while Roman art usually depicts the priestesses veiled by the *suffibulum* or with elaborately coiffured hair in portrait statues to preserve their modesty²²⁵. Festus describes the *suffibulum* as:

suffibulum vestimentum album, praetextum, quadrangulum, oblongum, quod in capite Vestales virgines sacrificantes habebant, idque fibula comprehendebatur (475L)

The *suffibulum* is a white, purple-bordered, four-sided, oblong garment, which the Vestal Virgins wore on the head when sacrificing, and it is fastened with a fibula

The veil of the Vestals is depicted on several sculpted reliefs dating from the late first century B.C. through the late second century A.D. The *suffibulum* is visible on a late Hadrianic portrait now in the collection of Museo Nazionale Romano (figure 22).

²²⁴ Beard 1980: 11.

²²⁵ DiLuzio (forthcoming).



Figure 22²²⁶
Hadrianic Portrait in Museo Nazionale Romano



Figure 23²²⁷
“Banqueting Vestals” Relief

According to DiLuzio, this is the only Vestal statue showing the veil pinned at the sternum in the same fashion as relief sculptures²²⁸. The veil lies on the crown of her hair and falls to the Vestal’s shoulders, revealing strips of the wool *vittae* wrapped around her coiffured hair. Although the sculpture is damaged, she seems to be standing over a small altar sprinkling what appears to be grain or incense with her right arm²²⁹. The Vestals’ *suffibulum* on the “Banqueting Vestals” Relief²³⁰, which dates back to the principate of Claudius, is well distinguished from their *tunica* and falls just over the Vestals’ shoulders before being fastened at the sternum with a

²²⁶ DiLuzio (forthcoming)

²²⁷ Thompson 2005: 175

²²⁸ DiLuzio (forthcoming); see figure one.

²²⁹ DiLuzio (forthcoming).

²³⁰ The “Banqueting Vestals” Relief, dating from the first century to the second century, was discovered in 1933. The fragmented relief is thought to be originally constructed for the Ara Pietatis Augustae, during the reign of Claudius. Though there is no definitive context for the relief, it shows a unique image of Vestals participating in an event different than how they are mostly depicted. Thompson 2005: 175.

round brooch²³¹ (figure 23). The *suffibulum* of the Vestals was often depicted in images of the priestess presiding over public sacrifices, and obstructs the view of the *seni crines* beneath it.



Figure 24²³²
Two Vestal heads from the Antonine Period



Figure 25²³³
Relief Fragment from the British Museum, London

Two Vestal heads from the Antonine period that may have originated in the House of Vestals and a relief fragment, heavily restored, located in the British Museum in London, give little insight into the structure of the *seni crines*, but show the Vestal's hair parted in the center and waved back into the *suffibula* and *infula*²³⁴ (figure 24 and 25, respectively). Although the surface of the “Banqueting Vestals” Relief is hard to distinguish, the middle-parted and waved hair can easily be seen on the six Vestals represented, as well as the *suffubulum* draped over their heads²³⁵. While these reliefs paint a clear picture of the front of the hair, it is hard to visualize what

²³¹ DiLuzio (forthcoming); Thompson 2005: 175.

²³² DiLuzio (forthcoming)

²³³ DiLuzio (forthcoming)

²³⁴ DiLuzio (forthcoming).

²³⁵ DiLuzio (forthcoming); Thompson 2005: 175.

the center portion of her hair could have looked like, or how it was achieved.

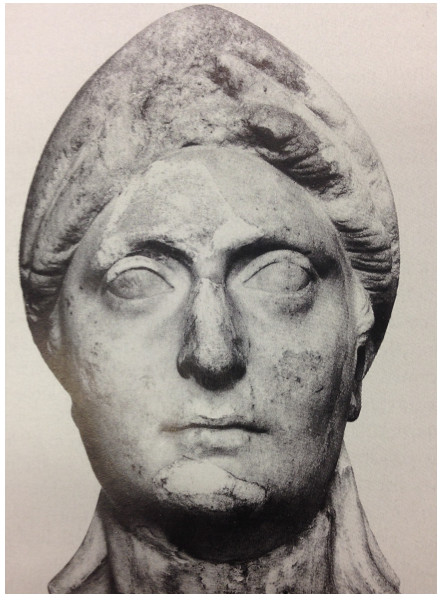


Figure 26²³⁶
Portrait head from the Late
Flavian-early Trajanic period

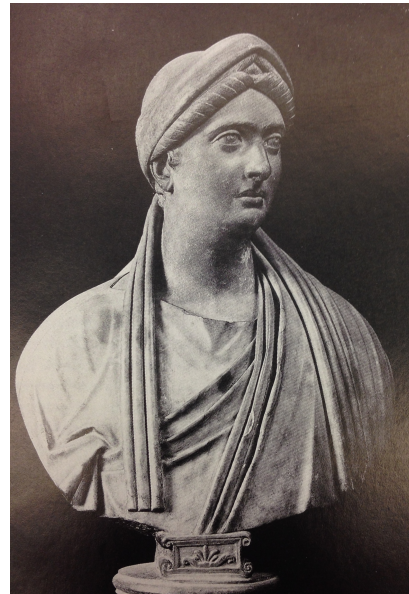


Figure 27²³⁷
Uffizi Vestal Bust

However, several portrait statues recovered from the House of the Vestals confirm that the *seni crines* did involve braids. The portrait head of a life-sized statue dating from the late Flavian-early Trajanic period, although damaged, shows twisted hair at the front of the Vestal's forehead (figure 26). A similar braid appears on the late Hadriadic portrait housed in the Museo Nazionale Romano (figure 22)²³⁸.

Furthermore the backs of several portrait sculptures reveal braids under the wool head wrap²³⁹. This visual allows scholars a basis for possible reconstructions.

²³⁶ La Follette 1994: 59; Fig. 3.3.

²³⁷ La Follette 1994: 59; Fig. 3.5.

²³⁸ Lindner 1996: 284-9.

²³⁹ Sculptures of the backs of the Vestals revealing the braids include the late Trajanic portrait bust now in Uffizi, Florence (La Follette 1994: 55; DiLuzio (forthcoming)) and portraits in the Antiquario Forense, which depict the same Vestal as in Uffizi (DiLuzio forthcoming).

Reconstructing the *seni crines* is problematic. As noted earlier (see chapter three), Janet Stephens' reconstruction of the *seni crines* using the Uffizi Vestal bust (figure 27) argues that six sections of hair, with each section then braided into a total of six braids, were wrapped around the base of the Vestal's head and then tied at the forehead²⁴⁰. However, her suggestion of a seventh braid then constructed to create a bun at the top of the forehead is rejected by Meghan DiLuzio and Molly Lindner, who argue that the seventh braid is merely part of the headdress, not an aspect of the *seni crines*. Thus, based on visual evidence collected from relief and statue portraits, it is evident that reconstructing and dissecting the *seni crines* is a troublesome task, for the hair itself is covered by the *suffibulum*. From what is observed on these visual sources, it appears that the *seni crines* consists of six braided tresses wrapped around the Vestal's head to form a support for her headdress and is constructed out of the long, strong hair of the Vestal.

In contrast to the idea that the Vestals wore long hair in order to construct the *seni crines*, the Vestal depicted on the Canelleria Relief appears to don short, wispy locks of hair beneath her *infula* (figure 28). This occurrence, and several other depictions, have led scholars to question whether the Vestals sported a short "bowl" cut and *infula* in place of the *seni crines*²⁴¹. Scholars who propose this theory cite Pliny the Elder as a source confirming that the Vestals wore short hair. Pliny mentions an old tree *quae capillata dicitur, quoniam Vestalium virginum capillus, ad eam defertur* (which is called the "hair tree" because the Vestal Virgins deliver their

²⁴⁰ Stephens 2013, January 4.

²⁴¹ DiLuzio (forthcoming); La Follette 1994: 59; Thompson 2005: 141; Lindner 1996: 67-81.

hair to it)²⁴². This implies that the Vestals cut their hair and placed it on the designated “hair tree”, as a tradition or rite of passage²⁴³. But other, scholars, such as Lindner, point out that Pliny does not confirm that the Vestals cut *all* their hair off and argue that the *infula* could not replace the *seni crines* because not every Vestal’s *infula* is wrapped around her head the same number of times²⁴⁴. For instance, the Vestal depicted in the Canelleria Relief wears an *infula* wrapped around her head only four times, therefore not representing the six braids of the *seni crines*, while the portrait of a Vestal from the Atrium Vestae also displaying short locks of hair, wears an *infula* wrapped around her head six times (figure 29). Since only a few occurrences of Vestals with a closely cropped coiffure exist, the theory that Vestals normally cut their hair short to hang it from the *capillata* is unlikely.



Figure 28²⁴⁵
Canneria Relief



Figure 29²⁴⁶
Portrait of a Vestal from the Atrium Vestae

²⁴² Pliny *H.N.* 16.235

²⁴³ The idea that Vestals wore the hair short is suggested by Jordan 1886: 47-8 and discussed in DiLuzio (forthcoming); La Follette 1994: 59; Thompson 2005: 141.

²⁴⁴ Lindner 1996: 67-81.

²⁴⁵²⁴⁵ La Follette 1994: 59; Fig. 3.6.

²⁴⁶ LaFollette 1994: 58; Fig. 3.4.

But can the cropped coiffure depicted on these Vestals be brushed off as fluke or sculptor error? Or does it reflect a change in the culture or time period in which these Vestals lived? To analyze these questions, one must first consider the context in which these sculptures were commissioned. Both the Cancelleria Relief and life-size portrait head from the Atrium Vestae date back to reign of Domitian, a period characterized by social and moral reforms. Committed to reviving the moral and religious practices of the State, Domitian renewed the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*, which reminded the Roman populace that adultery was a punishable offense²⁴⁷. As *pontifex maximus*, he then established an active role supervising the moral behavior of the Vestals. Suetonius notes that during his reign, Domitian brought six Vestals before the *collegium pontificum* on charges of *incestum* but tried and executed only three Vestals, Varronilla and two Oculata sisters²⁴⁸. Likewise, Cornelia, the *virgo maxima* suspected of moral transgressions, was first acquitted of her charges, but was later convicted in a second trial held in her absence and buried alive around A.D. 90 or 91²⁴⁹. Domitian's insistence on exercising his right to supervise the Vestals' actions not only reinvigorated traditional practices but also renewed a sense of moral discipline in the Roman people. The trials of the Vestals throughout Domitian's reign succeeded in drawing attention to the Vestal's symbolic role in society as a priestess and living representation of the state's morality and prosperity. Thus, the appearance of shorthaired Vestals on the Cancelleria Relief during the reign of Domitian reflects the emphasis on moral

²⁴⁷ Thompson 2005: 123.

²⁴⁸ Suet. *Dom.* 8.4.

²⁴⁹ Suet. *Dom.* 8.4; Pliny *Ep.* 4.11.9; Staples 1998: 136; Thompson 2005: 124.

discipline. Perhaps the Vestals began wearing their hair, or at least began depicting their hair, as short to better represent their vow of chastity and moral devotion to the welfare of the state²⁵⁰. In a way, the Vestals renewed their devotion to Rome.

Perhaps their short coiffure further reflects their status as outsiders in the Roman social structure. Elizabeth Bartman, in her assessment of Roman hair and adornment, argues that women's hair in general tended to be more symmetrically coiffed than men's, and stray hair would have been kept in place by hairpins. Men's hair, on the other hand, is depicted as short and with more movement. She claims that this implied men's active role whereas the women's hair represented passivity²⁵¹. As previously noted, the Vestals do not conform to the social roles of matrons or brides, but are not enfranchised to the level of a male Roman citizen. In a way, they are in a unique social class of their own, held in high esteem by both men and women. Similar to the argument that the *seni crines* was an outward symbol of the Vestal's chastity, I argue that the short bowl-cut depicted on several reliefs and sculptures throughout Domitian's reign is another representation of the Vestals being "in between" social classes.

Unlike matrons, the Vestals retained unusual political liberties. For instance, Gellius emphasizes that the Vestals were emancipated from *patria potestas*, the legal paternal bond between a father and child. Upon passing into the hands of the *pontifex maximus*, she acquired the right to make a will without the legal ceremony of emancipation or loss of civil rights²⁵². The fact that she passed out of *patria*

²⁵⁰ Thompson 2005: 122.

²⁵¹ Bartman 2001, *AJA*: 1-3.

²⁵² Aul. Gell. *A.N.* 1.12.

postestas without undergoing *capitis deminutio* or *emancipatio* is peculiar to the Vestals, for when a bride passes out of *patria potestas* she is immediately placed under the protection of her husband²⁵³. While the *captio* ceremony between the Vestal-elect and the *pontifex maximus* does parallel a marriage ceremony, the *pontifex maximus* does not mimic the same relationship as a father or husband. He could not inflict corporal punishment and only the entire *collegium pontificum* could condemn a Vestal accused of *incestum*²⁵⁴. A woman free from *patria potestas* had no power to conduct business or write a will without the supervision of a *tutor*, which was not the case for Vestals. Neither Gellius, Plutarch, nor Dio Cassius mention the consent of a *tutor* in their documentation of the rights of Vestals²⁵⁵. Lastly, the most conspicuous attribute of the Vestals that places them in their own social class is their accompaniment by *lictores*, a symbol of public office and bearers of the fasces. Not all magistrates or priests were escorted by *lictores* in public²⁵⁶. While Festus notes that the *flamen Dialis* was accompanied by *lictores* on account of his sacred duties, he also implies that it was not a usual tradition for priests. In fact the Vestals were the only women accompanied by this image of power²⁵⁷. This makes them a unique figure of authority and a recognizable figure in art. A segment of the altar frieze of the Ara Pacis shows the procession of six Vestals accompanied by three men: two *lictores* carrying the *fasces*, symbolizing the authority and sacred status of

²⁵³ Gardner 1991: 23; Staples 1998: 141.

²⁵⁴ Gardner 1991: 25.

²⁵⁵ The political privileges of the Vestals are mentioned in Aul. Gell. *A.N.* 1.12; Dio 55.22; Plutarch *Num.* 10.

²⁵⁶ Staples 1998: 145; Dio 47.19.4; Plutarch *Num.* 10.3.

²⁵⁷ Festus 82 L; Staples 1998:145.

the priestesses, and one priestly figure²⁵⁸. Thus, from the day she enters her priesthood she becomes a political outsider. Her short hair symbolizes her more active role in society as both a political and religious figure, and a national representation of Rome²⁵⁹.

Since the Vestal in the Cancelleria Relief is clearly wearing a *stola* and *infula*, she is still represented in a feminine fashion. While her short coiffure symbolizes her unique political rights more similar to men, her traditional *stola* allows her to retain her femininity and status as a woman. She is in social limbo. Not quite in the status of a traditional matron, but obviously not a man. Although the *seni crines* is not represented, and therefore cannot be the compulsory hairstyle of the Vestals, it does not mean this is not an accurate depiction of the Vestals of this time. The focus is not on their chastity. Coming from the era of Domitian, when the Vestals were more controlled and scrutinized, these depictions are instead a reminder of their sacrosanctity and power.

The images of Vestals with cropped hair depict a period of unusual representation of the priestesses. Later depictions, such as the two Vestal heads from the Antonine period (figure 24), show that the Vestals returned to the practice of keeping their hair long in order to style it in a traditional *seni crines*. With the exception of the Cancelleria Relief, the hairstyle of the Vestals is depicted in a uniform style, comprised of the six-braided *seni crines* covered by the *suffibulum*.

²⁵⁸ Thompson 2005: 46.

²⁵⁹ Beard 1980: 11

The Infula and Vittae

In addition to the *seni crines*, the Vestal's hairstyle was marked by a headdress composed of the *infula*, white, woolen bands coiled around her head, and the *vittae*, which were attached to the *infula* and fall down the shoulders of the Vestals in strands or loops. Since this headdress is visible on every Vestal portrait in some form, its existence is clearly a symbol of their chastity, sacred status, and rank within the order²⁶⁰. The headdress represents her identity as a Vestal in good standing. A Vestal found guilty of *incestum* is stripped of her *infula* and *vittae* before receiving her punishment, therefore signifying her loss of priestly status²⁶¹. Similarly, a Vestal who retires from service after thirty years is expected to remove her insignia²⁶². The strong connection between the Vestal and her headdress is undeniable, for it represents her livelihood and status²⁶³.

Several ancient sources note the importance of this headdress and its significance to the wearer. For example, Servius describes the *infula* and *vittae* as "a band similar to a diadem, from which ribbons hang down on either side; most are broad and twisted [and in color they are] red and white"²⁶⁴. Seneca likewise notes that the *infula* is a protective diadem that sets the wearer apart as inviolate²⁶⁵. Both in appearance and function, the Vestal's *infula* resembles the Greek *agrenon*, a wool string held together at consistent intervals with knots, which is used to ward off

²⁶⁰ Lindner 1996: 76; DiLuzio (forthcoming).

²⁶¹ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.89.4-5.

²⁶² Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.67.2.

²⁶³ DiLuzio (forthcoming)

²⁶⁴ Servius: *In Aeneadem* 10.538.

²⁶⁵ Sen. *Epist.* 14.11.

evil²⁶⁶. The *infula* not only marks her as a protected official; Festus makes clear that the significance of these headbands comes from the person who wears it. He defines the *infula* as a “wool thread, with which priests, and sacrificial victims, and temples are veiled”²⁶⁷. According to the sources, the *infula* is a diadem-like headband wrapped around the Vestals’ head that resembles the headpiece of sacrificial and religious leaders. The *infula* is easily recognized by its wide bands in the Cancellaria Relief, the late Hadrianic portrait, and the Uffizi bust (figure 28, 22, and 27 respectively). The *infula*’s similarity to the headpiece of the religious figures and its apotropaic functions communicate The Vestal’s status as a priestess and an important figure in the civic life of Rome.

While the *infula* appears on all visual depictions of the Vestals, the ancient sources do not specify the number of times it should wrap around her head. In fact, not every Vestal is depicted with the same number of bands. The Vestals in the Cancellaria Relief and Hadrianic portrait and the two Vestals in the Antiquario Palatino each show at least four turns of the *infula*. However, the Vestal depicted on the fragmentary relief in the British Museum shows only two turns of the *infula* (figure 25). Molly Lindner suggests, that this discrepancy in the rows of *infula* is used to differentiate status within the order²⁶⁸. She argues that the *virgo maxima*, oldest and highest ranking Vestal, wore six turns of the *infula*, and the order and rank descended until the youngest member wore only one turn. While this theory corresponds to most depictions, she notes that the practice must have changed

²⁶⁶ La Follette 1994: 63.

²⁶⁷ Festus 100L describes it as such: *infulae sunt filament lanea, quibus sacerdotes et hostiae templaque velantur*.

²⁶⁸ DiLuzio (forthcoming); Lindner 1996 75; Thompson 2005: 117.

around the early Severan period, for several portraits were produced with six bands during this time²⁶⁹. If Lindner's theory is correct, the *infula* was a visual representation of a Vestal's status within the order. It was a constant reminder of her rank to both the outside society and the religious college. The *infula* defined her identity. It rendered her a sacred member of society, through its connection with priests and similarity to a diadem, and gave her a position within her order.

While the *infula* represents how outsiders view her unique position, the *vittae* are a reflection of her internal qualities, such as her devotion to chastity. Ovid and Tibullus discuss the symbolism of the *vittae* in the context of faithful matrons and suggest that it is a symbol of modesty²⁷⁰. A matron's *vittae* were more structural; they were used to bind the *tutulus*, or hairstyle of the *materfamilias*²⁷¹. Although Stephens does note that the *vittae* were wrapped around the front section of hair in the *seni crines* in order to keep the hair in place, the Vestal's *vittae* were not necessarily structural like the *materfamilias*, for their specific purpose is not to tie back the hair²⁷². Instead, the *vittae* appear as cloth loops or strands resting on the Vestal's shoulders, as are clearly depicted on the Uffizi bust and figure 22. While the Vestals share the symbolic meaning of chastity, represented by the *vittae*, with matrons, the depiction of *vittae* as cloth loops is unique to the costume of Vestals. DiLuzio argues that the Vestal's *vittae* symbolized her perpetual physical virginity

²⁶⁹ Lindner 1996: 75.

²⁷⁰ Ov. *Ars* 3.483; *Pont.* 3.3.51-2; Tib. 1.6.67. Sebesta (1994: 49) also discusses the connection between a matron's *vittae* and chastity.

²⁷¹ Olson 2008: 38-40; Dolansky 2008:54.

²⁷² Stephens 2013, January 4.

(*castitas*), rather than the modesty and fidelity (*pudicitia*) of matrons²⁷³. The *infula* and *vittae*, paired with the *seni crines*, symbolize her position as a religious figure and her rank within the order, as well as her lifelong virginity.

The Dress and Palla

While the hairstyle and headdress of the Vestals are discussed by ancient authors and analyzed through art, their dress, however, is less certain. Some scholars argue that they wore a *stola*, the traditional dress of a Roman matron²⁷⁴. However, wearing a *stola* was a right, a mark of honor distinguishing the wearer as a *matron*, a wife living in an *iustum matrimonium* (legal marriage)²⁷⁵. Festus states that the Romans “generally were calling matrons those who had the right to wear the *stola*”²⁷⁶. Furthermore an inscription, possibly from the middle of the first century, illustrates the marriage of a slave woman name Horea, who married the freeborn son of two free parents. It reads: *leibertate illei me, hic me decoraat stola* (they freed me, he bestowed on me the *stola*)²⁷⁷. Thus, as previously argued, the *stola* was a privilege of a matron and was a symbol for her faithful marriage and *pudicitia*. By pairing both the *stola* of a matron and *seni crines* of the bride, the Vestal’s appearance undoubtedly reflects her status as a woman “in between” phases of life, caught in the transition between bride and matron. This furthermore reflects her vow of chastity and perpetual virginity. The Vestal’s costume is uniquely her own, for, as Festus noted, it was the bride who mimicked the *seni crines* of the

²⁷³ DiLuzio (forthcoming).

²⁷⁴ Beard 1980: 16; Olson 2008: 27; Wildfang 2006: 13.

²⁷⁵ See Chapter 1; Sebesta 1992:49; Olson 2008: 29; DiLuzio (forthcoming).

²⁷⁶ Festus 112L: *matronas appellabant eas fere, quibus stolas habendi ius erat*

²⁷⁷ Olson 2008: 29.

Vestals, not the other way around. If this were the case, then why would the Vestals choose to imitate a dress specifically granted to matron as a symbol of their legal marriage?

DiLuzio suggests that the Vestals wore a long *tunica* rather than a *stola*²⁷⁸. She argues this by refuting the commonly accepted idea that Pliny the Younger confirms that the Vestals wore a *stola*. In his commentary on the conviction and execution of Cornelia in A.D. 90, he notes that the Vestal wore a *stola* to her tomb:

Cum in illis subterraneis demitteretur, haesissetque descendenti stola, vertit se ac recollegit, cumque ei manum carnifex daret, aversata est et resiliit foedumque contactum quasi plane a casto puroque corpore novissima sanctitate reiecit (Ep. 4.11.9)

When she [Cornelia] was taken down into that underground chamber, descending, her *stola* caught on something, she turned and gathered it, and when the executioner reached out his hand, she recoiled and leaped back and refused his filthy touch as if, clearly, a last act of piety from her pure and chaste body.

Although this first appears to confirm that Cornelia wore the dress of a Roman matron, it fails to take into account that she was considered unchaste, and not an accurate representation of a Vestal in good standing within the order. As previously noted, upon being sentenced to death for *incestum*, the Vestal was required to remove her *infula*, a symbol of status and virtue. Furthermore, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a shamed Vestal was defrocked before being buried

²⁷⁸ DiLuzio (forthcoming).

alive²⁷⁹. Therefore, it is likely that Cornelia removed her traditional dress and replaced it with a *stola*.



Figure 30²⁸⁰
Vestal from the Atrium Vestae

Instead, the Vestals wore a *tunica*, the basic garment of every Roman woman, belted beneath the breast with a Hercules Knot, as displayed the portrait statue of a Vestal retrieved from the Atrium Vestae (figure 30)²⁸¹. This symbolized their absolute virginity and “in-between” status. She had not earned the privilege of wearing the *stola*, and therefore wore a basic garment instead. DiLuzio concludes her argument by pointing out that no straps are visible on the shoulders of Vestals represented in sculpted portraits or reliefs. Only a lost Vestal portrait formerly housed in the collection of Palazzo Giustiniani may have shown her wearing a *stola*, but Lindner argues that the Vestal head and the attached torso do not belong together²⁸². Therefore, it is most likely that Vestals wore a *tunica* rather than a *stola*, for there is no connection between the Vestals and the implications and symbolic

²⁷⁹ *Ant. Rom.* 9.89.4-5; DiLuzio(forthcoming).

²⁸⁰ DiLuzio (forthcoming)

²⁸¹ Lindner 1996: 243-44.

²⁸² DiLuzio (forthcoming); Lindner 1996: 336-41.

meaning behind the matron's *stola*. They do not meet the criteria required to wear a *stola*.

Lastly, the Vestals wore a *palla*, or long rectangular mantle draped around the left shoulder and held in place by the wearer's arm. The *palla* could be wrapped around the wearer's body or used as a veil, thus preserving her modesty²⁸³. The elder Seneca notes that veiling the face and head was a common practice for women; it allowed them to avoid public gaze and express modesty²⁸⁴. Thus, the *palla* was a mark of honor and dignity and signified the Vestal's commitment to retaining her modesty in public. Furthermore, the *palla* expressed the Vestal's status as a sacred and priestly figure. Both men and women practiced the act of veiling one's head during public sacrifice. For instance, a man would cover his head with the fold of his *toga* while sacrificing to demonstrate piety and respect for the gods²⁸⁵. Similarly, women would cover their heads with a *palla* when participating in public sacrifice²⁸⁶. Most depictions of the Vestals show their head veiled by a *palla* and *suffibulum*, thus illustrating their presence as a public and priestly figure. The *tunica* and *palla* represented in Vestal portraits and reliefs communicate the Vestal's devotion to modesty and reflect her status as a priestess. Preserving their modesty and dressing in a modest fashion was crucial for the Vestals, for they were blessed with the responsibility of maintaining the welfare of the State. Any deviation or questionable choices made them liable to scrutiny and suspicion of *incestum*.

²⁸³ Olson 2008: 33.

²⁸⁴ Sen. *Con.* 2.7.6

²⁸⁵ Stone 1994: 17 and 21.

²⁸⁶ Dolansky 2008:54.

Conclusion

Together, the *seni crines*, *suffibulum*, *infula*, *vittae*, *palla*, and the dress reflect the Vestal Virgins' unique status in Roman society. While each individual element of her costume symbolizes a different aspect of their position, when worn together, they represent the Vestals' identity as a whole. For example, the *seni crines* and *vittae* represent the Vestals' devotion to chastity and morality. Likewise these shared features of brides, matrons, and Vestals communicate their status as outsiders among Roman women; a Vestal is caught in a moment of transition, neither a bride on her wedding day nor a faithful matron devoted to *pudicitia*. Instead, these aspects of her attire represent her absolute virginity, the defining characteristic of the Vestal Virgins. On the other hand, the *infula* and *suffibulum* reflect her position as a religious figure with the right to preside over public sacrifices and possibly her rank within the order. Finally, her *palla* and *tunica* protect her modesty by shielding her from the public. The function of the *tunica* is two-fold; it both references the fact that she is not a *matrona*, for she does not meet the criteria for wearing a *stola*, and promotes her moral character and devotion to modesty.

The costume of the Vestals was particular to these unique women. While certain elements are shared with other women or priests, no other figure wore this combination of clothes. Her clothing ultimately reflects her most important responsibility: her position as a living, breathing representation of Rome. She was blessed as the symbol of the integrity of the Roman state and protector of the realm. The Vestal's specific role in society is undoubtedly represented in her appearance.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The costume of a Roman woman portrayed more than merely a fashion statement or individual style; it reflected her status and role in society. Every aspect of her clothing was intention, worn to symbolized either her specific status as a young girl, matron, bride, or female priestess, or the idealist qualities she strived to display, such as *pudicitia*, chastity, or purity. The components of her costume worked together to project a different message.

For young girls, her costume reflected her immaturity and adolescence. She wore a *toga praetexta*, a purple bordered toga, her hair bound in *vittae*, ribbons, and the *lunula* amulet around her neck. Both the *toga praetexta* and *lunula*, if in fact worn, brought her protection from the dangers of childhood. According to Roman culture, children were weak and easily corrupted during their early years. The purple border of the toga and the *lunula* acted as apotropaic insignia meant to ward off evil spirits and protect her from the continuous dangers of childhood. The *vittae* on the other hand, reflected her innocence and purity, for they were connected to other sacrificial and spiritual characters. Similarly, the costume of the *matrona* reflected her status as an honorable and respected married woman. She wore a *tunica*, basic dress of all Roman women, a *stola*, the slip-like over garment, a *palla*, a veil to shield her face and hair in public, elaborately coiffured hair, and other elements. While the costume of a young girl symbolized her immaturity, the

costume of a *matrona* symbolized her maturity and status as a wife and mother. Most importantly, it represented her *pudicitia*, which can be translated as modesty or sexual virtue. Although for Roman men there was a distinction between a virtue, something displayed through action, and sex, a private action, for women, virtue and sex were synonymous. Their virtue, or moral excellence, was highly predicated on their chastity and sexuality. In a way, a *matrona* literally wore her virtue and the honor associated with sexual virtue on her sleeve. This is further exemplified through her *stola*, the quintessential dress of a legally married wife of a Roman citizen. Wearing this garment was an honor that demonstrated the expectations placed upon her by society and her dedication to fulfilling those expectations. The fact that not any one could wear a *stola*, for prostitutes and adulteresses wore the *toga* as a symbol of their *impudicitia*. It distinguished the *matronae* as an exemplum of morality and gave them a specific place in society.

Furthermore, the costume of a Roman bride reflected her transition from childhood to adulthood. She wore a *tunica recta*, a straight, white dress woven on an ancient upright loom, the yellow *flammeum* veil, and the *seni crines* hairstyle. The *tunica recta* dress was woven by the bride before her wedding as a sign that she was skilled enough to weave clothes for husband and children. This garment not only demonstrated her domesticity, but also her virginity, as the color white was often associated with purity. Similarly, the *flammeum* veil, by association with the *Flaminica Dialis*, was a symbol of constancy and a fruitful marriage. It was also a good omen for the marriage, for the marriage between the *Flaminica* and her husband was eternal. They were not permitted to divorce. By wearing the same veil

as the *Flaminica*, a bride projected the image of a faithful and devoted wife. Finally, the *seni crines*, the hairstyle shared with the Vestal Virgins, further demonstrated her chastity. Both the status of a bride and her costume were uniquely transitional. Because she was transitioning from one phase of life into the next, her garments incorporated elements and symbolism from the costumes of young girls and *matronae*.

Lastly, the costume of the Vestal Virgins emphasized her role as a sacred and unordinary woman and projected a sense of social oddity. She held a unique “in between” status in the Roman social order: she was neither a bride, although they shared the same hairstyle, nor *matrona*, because she was a perpetual virgin and the priestess of Vesta. She donned a *seni crines* hairstyle, a headdress composed of the *infula* and *vittae*, a *suffibulum* veil, and a *tunica* dress. By not conforming to the appearances of ordinary Roman women and wearing her own unique costume, a Vestal’s image emphasized her role as a sacred and unordinary character. For instance, when worn together, the *seni crines*, *infula*, *vittae*, and *suffibulum* reflected a Vestal’s sacrosanctity, purity, and modesty. Likewise, the idea that Vestals wore a *tunica*, rather than a *stola*, emphasized the idea that they held an unusual role in society. The *stola* was the archetypal dress of a married woman, and there could not have been worn by the Vestals. Instead of drawing their authority from the house, like a matron, these priestesses drew their authority and status from their role as the protectors of the Roman realm and symbols of the integrity of the state. Unlike the *matronae*, the Vestals were never bound to a husband and as a result were able to retain their freedom.

While each category and subcategory of these women wore a different costume, they supported the overarching idea that their attire was symbolic of their status within the Roman society. Each article of clothing was intentional, worn to further reflect her unique position as a mother, bride, or priestess. Dress was more than merely a fashion statement or expression of individuality, but, more importantly, a symbol of women's roles in society.

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