

THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF TRAJAN'S FAMILY

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THERE IS AN ANECDOTE concerning Trajan's wife, Pompeia Plotina, preserved in Cassius Dio. It states that upon entering the imperial palace for the first time, the empress declared (68.5.5):

"I enter here such a woman as I would fain be when I depart."¹

It is the only evidence for the public image of the Ulpian family members to be found in Dio's account of the period; nevertheless, it accords well with the presentation of the imperial household that survives to us in Pliny's *Panegyricus* and the visual propaganda of the period. The public image of the Ulpian family—retiring, subservient, chaste, and utterly devoted to the emperor—is one that is intimately linked with propaganda of Trajan's personal status. His monolithic presence in both the literature and art of the period denies any achievement to members of his family, alive or deceased. On another level, control of the imperial family—the senior members of his *consilium*—was an image rich in political profit in the two decades following Domitian's assassination at court and in the intellectual climate that received both of Tacitus' historical works and Suetonius' imperial biographies, works that both deal with factional court politics and with ideals (and their antitheses) of women in the imperial household.

It is undeniable that Trajan inherited a complex legacy of the imperial family's public imagery from Domitian. As the daughter of the executed general Corbulo, Domitia Longina, through her connection to certain victims of prosecution under Nero, was certainly of benefit to the Flavian house in its revisionist interpretation of its ascendancy under the Julio-Claudian emperors.² She bore a son to Domitian in 73, who died in infancy and was deified by the emperor soon after the accession: court poetry and repeated numismatic issues promulgated the new deity and promoted Domitia's role as DIVI CAESARIS MATER.³ The imperial family suffered a dramatic change

1. This translation is from E. Cary's Loeb Classical Library edition of Cassius Dio (Cambridge, Mass., 1914–27).

2. For the prosopographical work, see B. W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian* (London, 1992), p. 43 and p. 204, n. 42.

3. H. Mattingly, *A Catalogue of the Roman Coins in the British Museum*, vol. 3 (London, 1966), nos. 62–63, 501–3, and *p. 414. The catalogue will hereafter be referred to as "*BMC* III," or "*BMC* II"; Mattingly's introductory remarks to the third volume will be referred to as "Mattingly."

in fortune early in Domitian's reign: Domitia was exiled in 83 and Julia Augusta's husband was executed, while the emperor's niece herself was permitted to remain in residence on the Palatine.⁴ These events—a devastating blow to the official imagery of *concordia* promoted on the early coin issues⁵—provided fertile ground for malicious rumors at court and defamatory reinterpretations, both during Domitian's reign and (naturally) in the generation after his assassination. Domitia had been divorced (Suet. *Dom.* 3.1)⁶; her lover was a *pantomimus* (Suet. *Dom.* 3.1, Mart. 11.13.3, and see *PIR*¹ P 95); the emperor himself killed her paramour in a street brawl (Cass. Dio 67.3.1); the emperor was now committing incest with his niece (Cass. Dio 67.3.2); by recalling Domitia, he contravened the *Lex Julia de adulteriis coercendis* even as he enforced it upon others (Suet. *Dom.* 8.3); an abortion killed Julia, pregnant with her uncle's child (Plin. *Ep.* 4.11.6; Juv. 2.29–33; Suet. *Dom.* 22). Numismatic endorsement was immediately withdrawn from the imperial women,⁷ but the damage had certainly been done: we may accept some of these rumors as posthumous, defamatory propaganda, but it is equally demonstrable that some of these rumors were prevalent during Domitian's reign, and that the emperor found their circulation serious enough to respond to.⁸ The last rumor we may cite in this respect is Domitia's complicity in the court conspiracy that resulted in the assassination of her husband.⁹

The aim of this study is to isolate and define the public image of Trajan's family as it was presented to his contemporaries in Italy in the period 98–117. The scope has been confined to Roman Italy, and monuments produced elsewhere in the Roman empire have not been considered.¹⁰ That is because the central issue of this aspect of Trajan's propaganda is political. This investigation seeks to make a contribution to the larger historical problem of why the Senate and ancient accounts of his reign found Trajan's administration so acceptable, when his policies were so akin to those of an emperor whose memory was condemned.¹¹ The methodology adopted here will be to

4. This is the safest reconstruction of the events, and here I follow Jones, *Domitian* (n. 2 above), 35.

5. *BMC* II, nos. 58–59 (joint issues with the emperor's bust on the obverse, Domitia's on the reverse); 60–61, 67, 249, *p. 350 (issues bearing the legend *CONCORDIA* or its symbol, the peacock).

6. Some scholars argue that this in fact was the case; see for example M. Humbert, *Le Remariage à Rome: Étude d'histoire juridique et sociale* (Milan, 1972), p. 173, n. 83. The case against is summarized by Jones (*Domitian*, p. 35 and p. 204, n. 52).

7. The only occasion after these events on which imperial women were celebrated was upon their deaths; see *BMC* II, nos. 458–63, 471–73, †p. 350, *p. 351.

8. Consider the execution of the son of Helvidius Priscus for his production of an Atellan farce based upon this theme (Suet. *Dom.* 10.4); see B. W. Jones, *Suetonius: Domitian* (London, 1996), 93–94.

9. Suet. *Dom.* 14.1; Cass. Dio 67.15.2–4, 67.15.4. For a review of the probable likelihood of this complicity, see Jones, *Domitian*, 37.

10. It is this narrower geographical scope and the time frame to which this paper has restricted itself (as well as the fundamental place it accords the literary evidence of the period) that have unfortunately limited my use of W. Kuhoff's massive overview of the archaeological evidence, *Felicio Augusto, Melior Traiano: Aspekte der Selbstdarstellung der römische Kaiser während der Prinzipatszeit* (Berlin, 1993).

11. The antithetical nature of the respective reputations of these emperors stands in marked contrast to their administrative continuity. After all, the notion of Trajan as a *continuator* of Domitianic policy is no novelty. A generation has now passed since K. H. Waters published his well-known synopsis of the late Flavian and early Antonine periods, in which the central theme was the identical policy of the two emperors: see "Traianus Domitiani Continuator," *AJP* 90 (1969): 385–405. Waters' thesis (as he readily admitted) was

investigate representations, both direct and indirect, of the imperial family and their status and role in society, as these survive to us in the public speeches, literature, monumental sculpture, and numismatics of the period 98–117. Those individual roles ascribed to Trajan's family that establish themselves significantly in more than one medium shall be taken to represent the more dominant themes within his public imagery.

I. THE FAMILY IN THE *PANEGYRICUS*

The central issue concerning Pliny's *Panegyricus* as a source for Trajan's propaganda is how reliably the consul adheres to the official public image of Trajan throughout his *gratiarum actio*. It is a basic premise of this study that the content of Pliny's speech reflects the propaganda of Trajan's administration dutifully, and it is a premise that will be demonstrated by reference and comparison to the archaeological material issuing from Trajan's government. Considerable circumstantial evidence also argues for the conformist nature of the speech and its author.¹² Pliny's career to 97 demonstrates his ability as a politician: he was *quaestor Augusti* c. 87/8, tribune of the plebs c. 92, praetor (probably) in 93,¹³ and then *praefectus aerarii militaris* for three years directly following his praetorship.¹⁴ Despite his claims of Domitianic thunderbolts passing close by his head (*Pan.* 90.5), it is clear that Pliny flourished under that emperor. Moreover, he found no disfavor, only further prestigious appointments, under Nerva when the political rhetoric of the day became revisionist and anti-Domitianic.¹⁵ Pliny, like L. Iunius Q. Vibius Crispus, made a habit of swimming with the stream.¹⁶ In the *Panegyricus*, Pliny publicly covers a number of topics that a careerist would avoid at all costs, without prior approval in one form or another. In the current study, we shall see that his treatment of the Ulpian family could be construed as extremely disrespectful in parts. We shall observe, for example, Pliny's claim that Trajan's father did not earn his triumphal *insignia* by himself (*Pan.* 14.1). This is not the sort of declaration a senator would make publicly, before the emperor, without some prior indication that it

largely based upon the research of some of the most distinguished classical scholars of the two previous generations (Waters acknowledged the work of Béranger, Crook, Garzetti, Hammond, Pignaniol, von Premerstein, and Syme at the outset of his article, p. 385, n. 1), and so it is not surprising that his primary argument has met with favor in the field of Flavian and Antonine research in the subsequent thirty years. See, for example, P. L. Viscusi, *Studies on Domitian* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1973); J. Devreker, "Les Orientaux au Sénat romain d'Auguste à Trajan," *Latomus* 41 (1982): 492–516; and B. W. Jones, *Domitian and the Senatorial Order: A Prosopographical Study of Domitian's Relationship with the Senate, AD 81–96* (Philadelphia, 1979) and the same author's biography of Domitian (*The Emperor Domitian* [New York, 1972]). Indeed, the overwhelming nature of present historiographical, archaeological, and epigraphic evidence leads to one conclusion: that Trajan's administration—in every crucial sphere—was executed according to Flavian precepts. Trajan was, in all respects but blood relationship, a Flavian emperor.

12. For this topic, see A. C. Andrews, "Pliny the Younger, Conformist," *CJ* 34 (1938): 143–54.

13. See R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), 653, 656–57, and Jones, *Senatorial Order* (n. 11 above), 114–15.

14. Syme, *Tacitus* (n. 13 above), 657.

15. Tacitus is open and honest about his career in the Flavian period; Pliny, less so: compare their respective accounts of their political careers in the *Historiae* and *Panegyricus*.

16. For which, see Juv. 4.89.

would find approval. There is no indication of Trajan's displeasure after the speech's delivery and publication. On the contrary, Pliny's career continued unabated until his death in Bithynia, c. 112, in the capacity of *legatus Augusti*.¹⁷ To use a modern analogy, Pliny was a company man: his steadfast adherence in the *Panegyricus* to Trajan's official public image is just one indication of this.

Close attention paid to the treatment of those people in the *Panegyricus* who were connected to the *princeps* by blood, marriage, or adoption reveals a number of common threads that, as we shall see, are consistent with the visual media that survive from this period. By far the dominant characteristic uniting the treatment of each of the members of the imperial family—Nerva, Traianus Pater, Pompeia Plotina, and Ulpia Marciana—is the subordination (when not outright denial) of personal achievement or, more commonly, its reallocation to the emperor. This principle, and the variations that attend it, are best illustrated by individual attention to each of the four members of Trajan's family—his adoptive father, Nerva; his natural father, M. Ulpius Traianus; his wife, Pompeia Plotina; and his sister, Ulpia Marciana—as they appear in the *Panegyricus*.

Nerva

Pliny's presentation of Nerva in the *Panegyricus* in many ways establishes the paradigm by which the other family members are portrayed. In spite of various complicating factors (which arise from the circumstances of the speech's delivery, along with the temporal proximity of the events described, and which affected Pliny's account of Trajan's adoption), the characterization of Trajan's adoptive father is nevertheless completely consistent with Pliny's technique of presenting other members of the imperial family. Nerva's case, even within the imperial family, presented difficulties to the panegyrist: apart from the initial PROVIDENTIA type¹⁸—which does not explicitly identify Nerva—it was to be 112 before he was acknowledged numismatically. Moreover, a general aversion to Nerva and his principate in the visual propaganda of Trajan's administration is demonstrable. Nevertheless, at its most basic and obvious level, Nerva's act of adoption—whatever the historical facts of the situation may have been—was both the ultimate source of Trajan's accession, and his primary legal validation for assuming the purple. It demanded elaboration.

Nerva is the focus of six chapters in the *Panegyricus*¹⁹—more than any other individual apart from Trajan himself—and, yet, it cannot be claimed that Pliny's portrayal was inconsistent with the general policy of keeping Nerva's government at arm's length from Trajan's. This was achieved by Pliny in his continual refusal to ascribe to Nerva control over, or responsibility for, Trajan's adoption, and in his (understandable) promotion of the active role of Trajan, his historical destiny, and his divine approval. These

17. Other posts and honors from 100 until his death are outlined by Syme (*Tacitus*, 78–81) and Jones (*Senatorial Order*, 115).

18. *BMC* III, nos. 53–55.

19. Plin. *Pan.* 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 89.

elements can be observed in a number of the motifs that Pliny uses in dealing with Nerva. His emphasis upon the old man's impotence is marked, and is revealed explicitly in passages that deal with events at Rome and the state of the empire (6.1):

Magnum quidem illud saeculo dedecus, magnum rei publicae vulnus impressum est: imperator et parens generis humani obsessus captus inclusus, ablata mitissimo seni servandorum hominum potestas, ereptumque principi illud in principatu beatissimum, quod nihil cogitur.

The great blot on our age, the deadly wound inflicted upon our realm, was the time when an emperor and the Father of the human race was besieged in his palace, arrested and confined; from the kindest of elderly men was snatched his authority to preserve mankind, from a prince was removed the greatest blessing of princely power, the knowledge that he cannot be forced against his will.²⁰

Moreover, Nerva is subjected to a kind of adjectival insistence in which his role is consistently passive and helpless: a shocking precedent had been set (*inductum pessimum exemplum*, 6.2); army discipline had been compromised (*corrupta est disciplina castrorum*, 6.2); the state had been shaken to its foundations (*concussa res publica*, 6.3); the empire itself was collapsing (*ruens imperium*, 6.3); Nerva was a man who had lost the regard of his country (*qui reverentiam amiserat*, 8.6); authority itself had been placed in dire peril (*in summum discrimen auctoritas*, 10.1); and obedience was lacking (10.1). Nerva's impotence is stressed and presented as the very *ratio* by which Trajan assumed power (6.2; cf. 7.1: *timor principem fecit*). Even in the adoption itself, Nerva's role is subordinated. The gods are credited with the adoption of Trajan, not Nerva (8.2):

Sibi enim gloriam illam di vindicaverunt: horum opus, horum illud imperium. Nerva tantum minister fuit, utque adoptaret, tam paruit quam tu qui adoptabaris.²¹

The gods have claimed the credit for this, since it was carried out at their command. Nerva was no more than their minister, no less obedient as adopter than you who were adopted.

Trajan's excellence, in any case, had entitled him to the principate years previously; only the anarchy of Nerva's rule was needed to show the debt of Rome to Trajan (6.3). Rare concessions to Nerva's character and role in the process²² are undermined by Pliny's focus upon Nerva's debt to Trajan in his acceptance of the adoption (6.4):²³

[I]lle tibi imperium dedit, tu illi reddidisti. Solus ergo ad hoc aevi pro munere tanto paria accipiendo fecisti, immo ultra dantem obligasti; communicato enim imperio sollicitior tu, ille securior factus est.

He gave you supreme power and you returned it to him. You alone in our time have made proper return for such a gift, simply by your acceptance of it; nay, rather, you put

20. English translations of Pliny's *Panegyricus* are taken from the Loeb edition of Betty Radice (Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

21. Similar sentiments are expressed at 5.1.

22. Such as at 6.4; 7.4, 7; and 10.4.

23. This motif finds further emphasis at 8.3, 4.

the giver in your debt, for the sharing of the authority increased your responsibilities while lessening his cares.

Finally, the *adoptio* is, in the *Panegyricus*, Nerva's one great deed, and Pliny's extended account of it culminates in the sentiment that he deserved deification for this act alone (10.6). Yet the preceding narrative makes it abundantly clear that it was born out of Nerva's impotence and Trajan's excellence, that Trajan put Nerva in his debt by his acceptance, and that, at the most basic level, the choice did not lie with Nerva, but with the prerogative of the gods and the heartfelt prayer of the nation.²⁴ The crux of the theme finds expression in Pliny's final address to the divine Nerva: the god is invited to feel pride in his choice, but also to know that Trajan is a better man than he (89.1), and to reflect upon the fact that he owes his place among the gods to Trajan (89.3).

Because of the temporally proximal, highly public, immediate, and legally validating nature of his role in Trajan's accession, Nerva proves somewhat of a special case within the presentation of the imperial family. Those who were directly related to Trajan by blood or marriage proved to be far less problematic to the panegyrist in his task of subordinating their status and achievements to the central figure of the *princeps*. As a rule, far less space is accorded the rest of the imperial family, and an increasingly dehumanized portrayal is employed. Trajan's immediate family is relegated to the status of a minor supporting cast whose role it is to benefit from and reflect—however imperfectly—the glory of their son, husband, brother, and emperor.

Traianus Pater

Trajan's natural father is a case in point. References are made to him in three chapters of Pliny's speech—less than half the space accorded to Nerva—and only at 89.2, near the climax of the oration, when he is addressed directly, is he explicitly named. The sole focus of Pliny's account of Traianus Pater is his Syrian command in the 70s and, more specifically, the triumphal honors that he accrued from an unknown diplomatic or military engagement during his tenure of that province.²⁵ In his first reference to the elder Trajan, Pliny posits the ludicrous suggestion that the honors were won for the father by the son, who, at that time, was a military tribune in his early twenties (at most) and under the command of his father (14.1).²⁶

Non incunabula haec tibi, Caesar, et rudimenta, cum puer admodum Parthica lauro gloriam patris augeres, nomenque Germanici iam tum mererere, cum ferociam superbiamque Parthorum ex proximo auditus magno terrore cohiberes, Rhenumque et Euphratem admirationis tuae societate coniungeres?

24. For the choice of the whole world (*ubi sunt homines*), see Plin. *Pan.* 10.2.

25. For the date of tenure and the possible causes of such honors, rare in this period, see the summary of modern scholarship cited by J. Bennett, *Trajan Optimus Princeps: A Life and Times* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997), p. 228, n. 30.

26. A suggestion that R. Syme rightly termed distasteful; see his review of M. Durry, *Plinie le Jeune: Panégyrique de Trajan*, *JRS* 28 (1938): 217–24.

You were scarcely more than a boy when your successes in Parthia helped to win fame for your father, when you already deserved the name of Germanicus, when the mere sound of your approach struck terror into the proud hearts of savage Parthians, when Rhine and Euphrates were united in their admiration for you.

It was clearly not enough that the focus be deflected from the father to the son, but a perfectly acceptable premise for increasing Trajan's prestige and a standard prerequisite for proclaiming oneself *capax imperii*—the auspicious career of one's ancestors—is suppressed and inverted: the son, even at this early stage, shed glory upon the father! Elsewhere, his father's *ornamenta triumphalia* were employed only to exhibit Trajan's own virtues of moderation and patience (16.1):

Sed tanto magis praedicanda est moderatio tua, quod innutritus bellicis laudibus pacem amas, nec quia vel pater tibi triumphalis vel adoptionis tuae die dicata Capitolino Iovi laurus, idcirco ex occasione omni quaeris triumphos.

But nurtured though you were on the glories of war, you have remained a lover of peace, and for this your moderation commands our greatest praise. Your own father had been granted triumphal honours, and on the day of your adoption laurels were dedicated to Capitoline Jupiter, but you did not seek opportunity for triumphs of your own.

Finally, in the scene in which the senior Trajan is coupled in heaven with the divine Nerva, Pliny portrays a sort of friendly struggle between the two to reap the greater share of glory from their son. In the ultimate address to Traianus Pater, the fact that the son was once a subordinate of his father is openly acknowledged for the first time, and although praise is accorded to the father directly—again, the only instance in the speech, and then, only for the gift to the world of his progeny—it is followed by a repetition of the earlier, preposterous, allegation and accompanied by a reminder of the debt the father owes to his son (89.3):

Macte uterque ingenti in rem publicam merito, cui hoc tantum boni contulistis! Licet alteri vestrum filii virtus triumphalia, caelum alteri dederit, non minor tamen vestra laus, quod ista per filium, quam si ipsi meruissetis.

All honour to you both for the immense service you have done your country and the great benefit you have conferred on it. Though it was your son's merits which brought one of you triumphal ornaments and the other his place in heaven, your glory for owing these to him is what it would be had you won them yourselves.

Plotina

The tendencies revealed in the treatment of Trajan's father—the suppression of individual identities other than Trajan's and the arrogation of individual achievement to the emperor—are intensified in their application to the women of the imperial house. Trajan's wife, Pompeia Plotina, and sister, Ulpia Marciana, are dealt with in two passages of the *Panegyricus* (83–84). Each woman is ostensibly the subject of consecutive chapters, but, as with the characterization of the other members of Trajan's family, the emperor is in fact the sole focus of the narrative. From the outset, it is clear that any praise accorded the women will redound to Trajan's credit, as is evident in

Pliny's lengthy general introduction to this theme, in which the *domus* is presented negatively, as a possible chink in Trajan's armour, a stumbling block to a perfect earthly fame (83.1):

Habet hoc primum magna fortuna, quod nihil tectum, nihil occultum esse patitur; principum vero non domus modo sed cubacula ipsa intimosque secessus recludit, omniaque arcana noscenda famae proponit atque explicat.

One of the chief features of high estate is that it permits no privacy, no concealment, and in the case of princes, it flings open the door not only to their homes but to their private apartments and deepest retreats; every secret is exposed and revealed to rumour's listening ear.

Immediately, though, Trajan is cleared of any suspicion that he may have failed in this area: nothing would be more accommodating to his glory than an inspection of these very quarters, because not only does he keep himself morally unsullied, but he is also responsible for keeping the members of his family free from any sort of vice (83.1–2). This, Pliny states, is because along with his own excellence Trajan makes all those around him like himself (83.3). Following these general remarks, a specific introduction initiates Pliny's representation of the empress, who throughout the speech is never mentioned by name. Again, a potential Achilles' heel for Trajan's reputation is suggested, this time in his choice of a wife. At 83.4, Pliny reminds Trajan that

... multis inlustribus dedecori fuit aut inconsultius uxor adsumpta aut retenta patientius; ita foris claros domestica destruebat infamia, et ne maximi cives haberentur, hoc efficebatur, quod mariti minores erant.

... many distinguished men have been dishonoured by an ill-considered choice of a wife or weakness in not getting rid of her; their fame abroad was damaged by their loss of reputation at home, and their relative failure as husbands denied them complete success as citizens.

The role of wife, then, is presented by Pliny as a potential obstacle to the perfect fame of Trajan. With this point established, Pliny assures Trajan, at 83.4–5, that his wife, however, *in decus et gloria cedit*. *Quid enim illa sancit, quid antiquius?* ("contributes to your honour and glory, as a supreme model of the ancient virtues"). Moreover, these congratulations are followed, at 83.5, by an automatically redundant avenue of praise, that the *pontifex maximus*, were he to choose a wife, would choose Plotina, or one like her, if only there were anyone like her! Finally, Pliny arrives at specific examples of praiseworthy behavior attributable to Plotina. She claims nothing for herself from her husband's *fortuna*; she is unswerving in her devotion, not to Trajan's office, but to Trajan; she and the emperor have the same relationship as first couple that they had prior to his accession; she is modest in her attire, moderate in her entourage, and is possessed of an unassuming demeanor (83.6–7). Such is the list of her specific virtues. As low-key as these attributes are, their ownership is nevertheless immediately displaced from Plotina to Trajan, and Plotina's motivation for exhibiting such character is reduced to emulation (at best) or to pale imitation (at worst), of

her husband's behavior. As such, they are not really Plotina's virtues at all. Pliny's conclusion to his portrait of Plotina, an elaboration upon her list of virtues, both makes this point explicit and emphasizes the debt of wife to husband (83.8):

Mariti hoc opus, qui ita imbuat ita instituit; nam uxori sufficit obsequi gloria. An, cum videat quam nullus te terror, nulla comitetur ambitio, non et ipsa cum silentio incedat, ingredientemque pedibus maritum, in quantum patitur sexus, imitetur? Decuerit hoc illam, etiamsi diversa tu facias; sub hac vero modestia viri quantam debet verecundiam uxor marito, femina sibi!

This is the work of her husband who has fashioned and formed her habits; there is glory enough for a wife in obedience. When she sees her husband unaccompanied by pomp and intimidation, she also goes about in silence, and as far as her sex permits, she follows his example of walking on foot. This would win her praise even if you [i.e., Trajan] did the opposite, but with a husband so moderate in his habits, how much respect she owes him as his wife, and herself as a woman!

Ulpia Marciana

By the time Pliny turned to Trajan's sister, the major themes in his portrait of Trajan's family had already been firmly established in their application to Nerva, Traianus Pater, and Plotina. They are easily detected and amply illustrated. For Ulpia Marciana, however, the denigratory presentation accorded to the rest of the family is intensified, with the result that less space and less autonomy are allotted to her in the *Panegyricus* than to any other member. No virtues, per se, are accorded her outright. Her praiseworthy attributes are summarized in nine words of the text, and in these, it is significant that the possessive pronoun employed by the panegyrist is in the second person rather than the third; that is to say, grammatically, they are his, not hers (84.1): *in illa tua simplicitas, tua veritas, tuus candor agnoscitur!* ("your own frank sincerity and candour can be clearly recognised in her").

This is it for Pliny's specific praise of Marciana. From here, she and Plotina are treated together in terms that emphasize their devotion and subservience to Trajan. Good training and fortunate birth are to be found in Plotina and Marciana respectively; in fact, Pliny declares it difficult to tell which advantage is more conducive to the upright life exhibited by both women (84.1). These remarks precede a considerable excursus on the danger of close proximity, both to each other in terms of relative status, and more importantly, to the throne. This danger, Pliny states at 84.2, is "fed on similarity of status and inflamed by jealousy until it ends in open hatred" (*alitur aequalitate, exardescit invidia, cuius finis est odium*). The solution to this danger is exhibited in the imperial women by their unswerving devotion to Trajan; moreover, their only goal is to emulate his example (84.3–5). The point being dutifully echoed by Pliny is revealed explicitly at the end of his digression (84.5): *neque enim umquam periclitabuntur esse privatae, quae non desierunt* ("they run no risk of being more than your subjects, for that is what they have always been").

Pliny's treatment of the Ulpian women concludes with an example of this contentment and subordination. Both were still refusing the title *Augusta* at the date of Pliny's oration. Two possible reasons are furnished by the consul; one advertises their subordination, the other, their devotion (84.6):

... cognomen Augustarum ... certatim deprecatae sunt, quam diu adpellationem patris patriae tu recusasses, seu quod plus esse in eo iudicabant, si uxor et soror tua quam si Augustae dicerentur.

... unwilling to bear it so long as you refused to be known as the Father of your country, or else believing it a greater honour to be spoken of simply as your wife and sister.

Because of their motives in refusal, Pliny concludes, they deserve the title all the more (84.7). Further, he celebrates their contentment in their lesser stations with a rhetorical question (84.8):

Quid enim laudabilius feminis, quam si verum honorem non in splendore titulorum, sed in iudiciis hominum reponant magnisque nominibus pares se faciant, et dum recusant?

... nothing can be more glorious for women than to value true distinction through the opinion of the world instead of by the magnificence of titles.

A brief consideration of the family's role in earlier Latin panegyric may help locate Pliny's approach to this topic within its context. It is argued above that the roles ascribed by Pliny to the imperial family were part of the government's program of self-representation. However, this notion could be challenged by two alternate explanations for Pliny's treatment of the family. The first complicating factor emerges in the conventional nature of the roles that Pliny has projected onto the women of the Ulpian household.²⁷ Roman law, literature, and epigraphy preserve for us a lengthy history of male ideals to be aspired to by the female members of the household.²⁸ Pliny's championing of *moderatio*, *modestia*, and *simplicitas*, and his promotion of the idea that the cornerstone of a felicitous marriage lies in *concordia*,²⁹ align him utterly with the standard male viewpoint on these topics. The second alternate explanation may lie in the genre of imperial panegyric. The fact that the speech's professed intention was to praise the emperor may have

27. A summary of the key concepts promoted by Pliny may be helpful at this point. Some of the following will be paraphrased for ease of expression. Positive concepts lauded are that the women contribute *decus* and *gloria* to their husband (83.4); that they claim nothing for themselves from his position (*nil ex fortuna sua vindicant*), and that the relationship between husband and wife remains unaltered after his elevation from *privatus* to *princeps* (83.6); that she is modest in her attire and moderate in the number of her attendants (*modica cultu, parca comitatu*, 83.7); that she possesses *civilitas*, *modestia*, *simplicitas*, *veritas*, *candor* (83.7–84.1); that they show themselves well instructed and born to a good family (*bene institui, feliciter nasci*, 84.1); that there is no sign of envy or rivalry (*nullum certamen, nulla contentio*, 84.3) in the household; that each of them loves Trajan totally (*effusissime diligit*); and that they strive to imitate and conform to their model (*imitari, subsequi*, 84.4); that they exhibit *moderatio*, and have attained *perpetua securitas* (84.5); and that they make themselves worthy of the great names they refuse to accept from the Senate (*magnis nominibus pares se faciunt*, 84.8). Few antitheses are offered in the speech, but at 84.2, we find jealousy (*aemulatio*), envy (*invidia*), and hatred (*odium*) as dangers that the female family members must strive to avoid.

28. For an overview of some of the epigraphic, literary, and legal evidence of male views of feminine ideals, see M. R. Lefkowitz and M. B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (Baltimore, 1982), chap. 2.

29. The term itself is not employed in the *Panegyricus*, but the idea is certainly present in such notions as *nullum certamen, nulla contentio* (84.3); *effusissima diligentia* (84.4); *perpetua securitas* (84.5), and that the women of his house *te [Traiane] imitari, te subsequi student* (84.4).

contributed to Pliny's reluctance to focus at length upon anyone other than Trajan. However, this issue of genre and the centrality of the subject in panegyric is worth some consideration. All of the examples of panegyric in verse and prose before Pliny that have come down to us exclude family members from the body of the text.³⁰ Now, perhaps this apparent tendency is an accident of survival, and perhaps other *actiones gratiarum* of the imperial period that have since perished did laud members of the imperial family directly. However, it is certainly the case in Statius' *Silvae*—chronologically the nearest surviving example of this genre—that the author does not digress to praise the virtues of his subjects' family members, even at points where it would be natural for him to do so.³¹ Indeed, against the backdrop of earlier Latin panegyric, Pliny's inclusion of the family for direct praise marks a significant departure from the norms of his genre. Assuming the novelty of this digression and given the circumstances of the speech's delivery, Pliny will have, at the very least, sought approval of its content from above as a matter of political necessity. The imagery of the family that Pliny promotes may well have been conventional, but the new consul would not have had the audacity to suggest roles for the imperial women that were of his choosing. Considering the genre of panegyric, the political necessity for these roles inherited by Trajan from the late Flavian period, and, as we shall see, the concordance of archaeological evidence with the themes of the speech, it is easier to conclude that Pliny was summarizing a program of imagery that was determined at a governmental level.

This is the evidence provided by Pliny's *Panegyricus* for the presentation of the imperial family. It demands close reading for its explicit testimony in this area, which may be relied upon because of the circumstances of its delivery: it is impossible to conceive that the consul would speak of the imperial family in Trajan's presence in any terms other than those that concurred with the official line of the emperor's public image. A divided house would open possibilities of factional conflict. The idea of a united house, impervious to court intrigue because of its contented subservience to Trajan, is the underlying message in the presentation of the *familia Ulpia*, and, as we shall see, it is one that permeates the visual propaganda of the period.

II. THE FAMILY IN VISUAL PROPAGANDA

IIA. Numismatics

The numismatic propaganda relevant to Trajan's family confirms the picture and the methods of the panegyrist.³² A meaningful role in his adoptive son's

30. See Cic. *Leg. Man.*, *Marcell.*; Tib. 3.7; *Laus Pisonis*; Stat. *Silv.* 2.7, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 5.2, and 5.3.

31. At *Silv.* 5.2.61–96, Statius writes of Crispinus' father without directly praising his virtues: a comparison of this passage and the relevant passages of the *Panegyricus* (83–84) underscores the novelty of Pliny's excursus on the family.

32. An extensive catalogue of the numismatic evidence for the Ulpian women can be found in H. Temporini, *Die Frauen am Hofe Trajans: Ein Beitrag zur Stellung der Augustae im Principat* (Berlin, 1978). Temporini's study—based upon a dissertation submitted some ten years prior to her book's publication—

public imagery is emphatically denied to Nerva, while the other imperial family members are defined only in terms of their relation to the emperor: either in their enhancement of his status, or in slogans that are innocuous by their generality when not indicative of subordination and loyalty to the emperor.

Nerva

Nerva's public image under Trajan, in numismatic propaganda as in panegyric, proved to be a special case, and so is treated first. One point that is certainly made clear from the extant visual imagery of Trajan's reign—especially in that period immediately following Trajan's adoption—is that Nerva is in no way as prominent as one might expect. The old man is, in fact, almost wholly passed over.

Two questionable numismatic references warrant discussion first. On the obverse portrait of one coin issue of the period before the emperor's third consulship, Trajan seems to be portrayed with Nerva's physiognomic peculiarities.³³ Instead of Trajan's usual slightly fleshy cheeks, muscular short neck, and fairly large eyes, on these coins we see Nerva's long, thin neck and jutting Adam's apple, his sunken cheeks and closely set eyes.³⁴ Even Trajan's distinctive coiffure seems to have adopted his predecessor's thick and almost carelessly dressed³⁵ cap of curly hair. What does this mean, and how is this apparent physiognomic assimilation to be accounted for? Almost certainly, it is to be rejected as a conscious effort on Trajan's behalf to associate himself with Nerva. A more plausible explanation for this phenomenon is to be found in the novelty of the regime. At this early stage in his reign, the mint may not have had access to the official portraiture of the new and absent emperor. Furthermore, the die engravers will certainly not have been adequately familiar with the new emperor's physiognomy and, so, this resemblance should not be considered a premeditated allusion promulgated by the new government.³⁶ A second possible reference to Nerva arises in the legend of the same issue. Trajan's usual obverse legend IMP CAES NERVA TRAIAN is replaced for this issue with IMP NERVA CAES TRAIAN, which, Harold Mattingly suggested, lays greater stress upon his adoptive father's name.³⁷ However, this is hardly an immediately striking allusion to Nerva. It is precarious to extract so precise a meaning from a gesture whose premeditation may be called into question on the same grounds as the por-

was criticized for its reluctance to reconcile the archaeological evidence of the Trajanic period with the society and the political situation in which it was produced (see C. R. Phillips, *Amer. Hist. Rev.* 85 [1980]: 866–67; for a more positive reception of the book, see P. Hertz, *Gymnasium* 87 [1980]: 454–55). After Temporini's catalogue, surprisingly little was done with this body of evidence, until its reexamination by M. T. Boatwright, "The Imperial Women of the Early Second Century," *AJP* 112 (1991): 513–40.

33. *BMC* III, nos. 46–51.

34. For Nerva's typical numismatic likeness, see D. E. E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven, Conn., 1992), 200.

35. Mattingly, xxxiii.

36. I am indebted to J. R. Melville Jones of the University of Western Australia for his advice on this matter.

37. Mattingly, lvii.

trait type it surrounds. Another explanation of the irregularity suggests that the issue in question did not represent the wishes of Trajan at all—who was to remain absent from Rome until 99 (Plin. *Pan.* 22.1; *Ep.* 3.7.6–7)—but of his *amici* and partisans in Rome.³⁸ Even if the emperor's title is read as a conscious allusion to Nerva, the reverse legend of this issue, TR P COS II PP, reveals a date at some point in 98,³⁹ the year of Nerva's death: a token acknowledgement (however oblique) of his connection to his adoptive father and a reminder of the legal machinery of his accession should elicit no surprise in this year.

More instructive than these irregularities in the coinage of 98–99 is the fact that Nerva was deified upon his death on 28 January 98.⁴⁰ As a matter of course, *flamines* are attested (e.g., *ILS* 6659), and Trajan incorporated the title “the son of the god Nerva” into his nomenclature at the instant of his predecessor's death (e.g., *ILS* 283). Nevertheless (and despite the newly acquired boost to Trajan's status resulting from his adoptive father's apotheosis), there would be no numismatic proclamation to advertise Nerva's consecration for another decade.⁴¹ When this event was finally celebrated, we will see that it was not done so in its own right, but accompanying the deification of Trajan's natural father.⁴²

The most explicit reference to Nerva in the years 98–99, though, was the PROVIDENTIA denarius type,⁴³ minted in 98. It is clearly intended to advertise both the legitimacy of Trajan's accession and, more importantly, his superior qualifications as *princeps* in comparison to Nerva. On the reverse of the coin, a figure stands on the right whose toga is drawn up over his head in the manner of *pontifex maximus* and who holds a scroll in his left hand. Both of these are iconographical prerogatives of the emperor and, therefore, the figure is to be identified as Nerva rather than the Senate.⁴⁴ Nerva is shown handing the globe to a new emperor, who is clad in military dress. Both figures are portrayed above the legend PROVID[entia]. Now, Mattingly has observed that “inasmuch as the provision for the succession is the most important of all future problems, that is the sphere in which PROVIDENTIA on imperial coins most freely moves.”⁴⁵ However, it is a legitimate question to ask whose providence is being celebrated here: on later Trajanic issues the possession of this virtue is explicitly stated,⁴⁶ and perhaps it is significant that the providence here is patently *not* defined as belonging to Nerva.⁴⁷ It has been noted of this reverse legend that it more than

38. P. L. Strack, *Untersuchungen zur römischen Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts*, Teil 2, *Die Reichsprägung zur Zeit des Trajan* (Stuttgart, 1931), 20–22.

39. As Trajan did not accept the title of *pater patriae* until 98, the year in which he also held his iterated consulship; see Plin. *Pan.* 21.1 and Mattingly, *liv.*

40. See *RE* 4.7, col. 149, lines 28–50; M. Hammond, *The Antonine Monarchy* (Rome, 1959), 206; pp. 224–25, n. 23.

41. Syme, *Tacitus*, 12.

42. *BMC* III, no. 498.

43. *BMC* III, nos. 53–55.

44. Mattingly, *lxvii*.

45. Mattingly, *lxvii*; J. Melville Jones, *A Dictionary of Ancient Roman Coins* (London, 1990), 256.

46. As on the PROVIDENTIA SENATUS issue (*BMC* III, *p. 38).

47. It is also tempting to see in this an indication of the degree of free will involved on Nerva's part in the adoption.

likely indicates divine, rather than human, providence,⁴⁸ and, certainly, this notion is in keeping with the emphasis we have seen that Pliny placed on the will of the gods rather than the foresight of Nerva in Trajan's adoption (*Pan.* 8.2).

The most palpable message of this issue, aside from the transference of power, is that so far from evincing a connection between these two men, the scene on the reverse emphasizes the differences between Nerva and Trajan. The new emperor assumes power from his togate predecessor in full military regalia, complete with spear. No more explicit reference to Trajan's military resources could be made in this context. In this one, potent image he portrays the legitimacy of his accession, the reason for his adoption, and the overriding reason why he must now be accepted as emperor by all parties at Rome: the new emperor could restore the discipline of the armies and the *fides* of the generals, and could return stability to the capital at a time when the old emperor could do none of these things.

Traianus Pater

In 112, Trajan returned to the theme of his parentage in numismatic propaganda. In this year, the emperor conferred divinity upon his natural father, who had certainly died by 100, and who had, in all probability, died prior to Trajan's adoption.⁴⁹ Coin issues of this period now proclaimed the newly enhanced genealogy of the emperor.⁵⁰ One type features busts of the gods together, facing each other on the reverse over the inscription DIVI NERVA ET TRAIANUS; although more often, in keeping with Trajan's avoidance of the memory of Nerva, the biological father is celebrated alone with the title DIVUS PATER TRAIANUS. This retrospective deification was obviously irregular and, owing to the lapse of time between the elder Trajan's death and his apotheosis, it is difficult to assess why he would warrant this honor now when it had been deferred for so long.⁵¹ In any case, the honor is more easily understood as a means to exalt the emperor rather than his father. Trajan's was now the unique honor of being the son of two gods. If this was the motivation, official policy is consistent with the treatment of the elder Trajan in the *Panegyricus*.

Plotina

When we turn to the remaining members of the Ulpian family, we observe that they are defined solely in terms of their relation to the emperor. Moreover, they are promoted in roles that are designed either to elevate the status of Trajan himself further, or to underscore the loyal subordination of the first family. Issues bearing the likeness of Plotina illustrate this point well. Of all the people featured on the obverse of Trajanic coins (apart from the

48. Mattingly, lxvii.

49. For his death prior to 100: Plin. *Pan.* 89.2. For the likelihood of his death before Trajan's accession, see Bennett, *Trajan* (n. 25 above), 19.

50. *BMC* III, nos. 498–99, 500–508.

51. Plin. *Pan.* 89.2: *nam tu quoque, si non sidera, proximam tamen sideribus obtines sedem* ("for you too, though not raised to the stars, must surely occupy the nearest place").

emperor himself), Plotina is featured on the highest number of issues and, yet, her numismatic debut is deferred until at least 112, fourteen years into the reign.⁵² The most popular reverse image of Plotina's coinage was of Vesta, seated and holding a palladium and a scepter.⁵³ Vesta's role as the goddess of the hearth, no less than her role in expressing the permanence of Rome, had made her generally applicable to the *Augustae* since Livia. Indeed, that empress was dubbed "the Vesta of chaste matrons" by Ovid,⁵⁴ and this is most likely the context in which Plotina is equated with the goddess: it is utterly in accordance with the representation of the first family in the *Panegyricus*. More specific types reinforce this domestic role: one reverse features an *ara Pudicitiae*, presumably erected in accordance with this aspect of her public image.⁵⁵ A solitary issue with Minerva on the reverse is hard to apply to any specific motif of public imagery;⁵⁶ but the issues that feature *Fides* are more easily reconciled with the imagery of a loyal and content household presented within the *Panegyricus*.⁵⁷ With regard to this last issue, the grain held by *Fides* is featured on another reverse, depicting *Genius*,⁵⁸ which will have assisted Trajan (though less specifically) in his wider program of abundance imagery.

Ulpian Women

Such are the coin issues of Plotina. The remaining Ulpian women, Marciana and Matidia, had an even lower numismatic profile, while alive. However, dead family members are eminently adaptable to the needs of public imagery: they can be deified and celebrated to the benefit of those who survive them, and their biographies can be suppressed or invented without concern that future actions will ever contradict the public version of their lives. Accordingly, upon the passing of Ulpia Marciana in 112, a series was published (*BMC* III, nos. 647–55) that celebrated her consecration, an event that advertised yet another divine relation for the emperor. Depicted on the series, in sequential order, were (1) Marciana's body being borne by a *carpentum* drawn by two mules; (2) an effigy of the new goddess with the attributes of Ceres; and, finally, (3) her apotheosis, in the standard form of an eagle, with its wings spread, set to fly to heaven. All three coins bear the legend *DIVA AUGUSTA MARCIANA* on the obverse, and the word *CONSECRATIO* encircles the obverse scenes. At some point following Marciana's death and prior to her consecration, a single coin type was issued with Marciana's sister on the obverse, and Matidia, her daughter, now *Augusta*,⁵⁹ on the reverse. The emperor's niece is depicted seated, in imitation of the goddess *Pietas*, with two children under her protection.⁶⁰ It is a highly appropriate

52. Datable by the reference to Trajan's sixth consulship in the emperor's titulature.

53. *BMC* III, nos. 525–58, †p. 124.

54. *Ov. Pont.* 4.13.29; although perhaps with tongue in cheek.

55. *BMC* III, no. 529. For the dedication, see Mattingly, lxxxii.

56. *BMC* III, *p. 107.

57. *BMC* III, nos. 1080–82.

58. *BMC* III, no. 530.

59. That Matidia is *Augusta* confirms that the issue was posthumous for her mother.

60. *BMC* III, no. 531.

image consistent with the picture of family harmony presented by Pliny: the younger Ulpian now takes her mother's place, exhibiting precisely the same virtue that was the sole characteristic of Marciana's public image. Further coin issues of Matidia are deferred until the closing twenty-four months of Trajan's rule,⁶¹ and these issues uniformly associate Matidia with Pietas. Her titulature now reveals Marciana's divine status—MATIDIA AUG. DIVAE MARCIANAE F.—and the reverses either feature the goddess sacrificing over a garlanded altar, or, more commonly, show Matidia protecting two small children over the legend PIETAS AUGUST.⁶²

IIB. Portrait Types

Monumental portrait sculpture can also be employed at this point to add general support to conclusions drawn from the more explicit media of literature and coinage. The central issue concerning the study of Trajan's portraiture as an avenue of his propaganda is the likely origin of visual allusions contained within his portrait types. In direct contrast to the visual images of classical Greece and mainstream modern conceptions of what is represented by portraiture,

... the Roman portrait ... is not an indissoluble nexus of mutually referential properties conceived on the model of a natural organism and presenting itself as a self-contained and self-justifying totality ... rather it is a system of formalized conventional references whose specific content and polemical point are defined positively by the evocation of desired applications and negatively by implied contrast with other images bearing an opposed intent.⁶³

Within this system, the manipulation of one emperor's official likeness to resemble another's was a standard and easily understandable political statement. By assuming the countenance of an adolescent in his official portraiture, even though he lived well into his seventies, Augustus was striking a contrast with the "veristic" style so typical of senatorial portraits of the Republic. Tiberius, in turn, by closely emulating the iconography of Augustan portraiture, could visually emphasize his legitimacy by advertising "familial" characteristics to which he could lay no blood claim. Vespasian could reject Julio-Claudian iconography and the undesirable associations with certain members of that family by returning to a republican style, which stressed his age and long service to the state.⁶⁴ Trajan, we shall see, also manipulated his official portrait types in order to distance himself from recent events, and (although it is outside of the scope of the present paper) we may also note at this point a push to associate himself visually with earlier emperors (especially Augustus) whose public imagery and historical reputations were of greater political currency.

61. That they are Trajanic and not Hadrianic was defended by Mattingly, lxxxii, against the dating proposed by P. L. Strack (*Römischen Reichsprägung* [n. 38 above], 67).

62. *BMC* III, nos. 658–64; 1088–89.

63. S. Nodelman, "How To Read a Roman Portrait," in *Roman Art in Context: An Anthology*, ed. E. D'Ambr (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1993), 14–15.

64. For standard treatments of this tendency of Roman portraiture, see Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (n. 34 above) or Nodelman, "How to Read" (n. 63 above).

Nerva

Certainly, if Trajan wished to emphasize the differences between himself and Nerva, then he was assisted greatly in this task by the style of monumental portrait sculpture that he adopted in the first years of his administration. Absent from Trajanic portraits in the round of this period are any physical allusions to Nerva, a device commonly employed by emperors to play up connections to predecessors of tenuous or no actual blood relation.⁶⁵ Comparison of the portrait types of Trajan datable to the years immediately following his adoption and accession⁶⁶ with any of the three extant marble portraits of Nerva believed to be manufactured during his reign is instructive.⁶⁷ Portraits of Nerva created during his administration, as exemplified by the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek bust,⁶⁸ depict the emperor with a high, sloping, and creased forehead, a hooked nose, a small, thin-lipped mouth, jutting Adam's apple, and creased, sunken cheeks. His hair is represented as vigorous and unkempt; it emanates from the crown, is relatively long on the back of the neck, and is arranged into curls above the forehead.⁶⁹ It is probable that Nerva's facial features were portrayed in this fashion in an attempt to associate him with the tradition of Flavian verism, with its strong allusions to senatorial portraiture of the late Republic.⁷⁰

The imperial image of Trajan stands in stark contrast to that of his predecessor. The bust held in the Museo Capitolino—a good example of a type-one portrait of Trajan—is typical of the new image. Trajan's face, despite the naso-labial lines that indicate his adulthood (he was, after all, forty-five at his accession), is smooth and clean-shaven, his lips and cheeks are more full and his mouth is wider than Nerva's. Furthermore, his large eyes are deeply shadowed beneath brows that (while more supple) are reminiscent of Augustan portraiture. Diana Kleiner has succinctly summarized the role of the Trajanic coiffure, and her comments are worth quoting verbatim:

What is most significant about Trajan's cap of hair is that it is not Vespasian's bald pate, nor Titus' short but curly coiffure, nor even Domitian's late Julio-Claudian tiara. The individual strands are arranged in a pattern of comma-shaped locks over the emperor's forehead, a style reminiscent of early Julio-Claudian times. The reference to Augustus and to such Julio-Claudians as Tiberius and Claudius was certainly a deliberate one.⁷¹

65. For this concept in Roman iconography, see, for example, the sculptural types of all the Julio-Claudian emperors and, in particular, the iconographical similarities between Tiberius and his adoptive father Augustus. Nodelman's comments ("How To Read," 17), are succinct and instructive: "The extraordinary synthesis of meaning accomplished in the [Prima Porta style] portrait of Augustus, precisely calculated with reference to the play of contemporary hopes, passions, and exigencies, made this work a political icon of matchless cogency and density of content. . . . Augustus' immediate successors illustrated their claim to authority by carefully approximating their portraits in style and format to his."

66. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, 208.

67. They are the heads in Copenhagen, Florence, and Rome; the rest are believed to be portraits recut from Domitianic sculpture, or posthumous (see Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, 200).

68. An image of this bust, and the Trajanic one with which it is compared, can be conveniently located in Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, p. 201, fig. 169 (for Nerva); and p. 208, fig. 171 (for the early Trajanic bust).

69. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, 200.

70. For which see Nodelman, "How to Read," 17–18.

71. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, 208.

Overall, it is obvious that the image promulgated in Trajanic portraiture alludes to a completely different sculptural tradition than do the images of Nerva. In exactly the period when we would expect references to his predecessor, Trajan, it seems, was more concerned with associating himself visually with Augustus and the early Julio-Claudian emperors. The Capitoline portrait of Trajan, like the PROVIDENTIA coin issue, is also significant for its emphasis upon Trajan's military prowess: on the left shoulder are preserved the partial remains of a *paludamentum* and, moreover, a *balteus* is detected on the right shoulder. We, therefore, observe another example of Trajan promoting his image as a successful general—the real source of his power—at the expense of his association with his adoptive father.

Ulpian Portraiture

The physiognomy of Ulpian portraiture also lends support to the overall consistency of the public image of Trajan's family. Plotina's portrait type is a case in point. There is certainly continuity between Flavian and Trajanic representations of facial features in the neo-veristic manner, in which age is accurately rendered and blemishes are more often celebrated than suppressed.⁷² However, the Ulpian hair type ultimately settles upon an undeniably more conservative, stylized, type than that worn by Domitia Longina and the female Flavian courtiers.⁷³ Gone are the ringlets and drill work which dramatically caught and contrasted light and shade, a characteristic of Flavian court portraiture. Plotina is represented with a strictly ordered row of comma-shaped locks on her forehead, over which the hair is tied into a knot, which, in turn, fans out into a low arc of identical, immaculately groomed locks.⁷⁴ Even when the Ulpian coiffure is at its most complex, as in the portraits of Matidia, the overall emphasis is upon strict control: the hairstyle "regulates wayward, undisciplined locks into an orderly, architectonic structure."⁷⁵ Beneath the hair, portraits of the imperial family are united by their downturned mouths and their matronly, disapproving expressions.⁷⁶ If the contentious bronze portrait from Ankara is to be taken as representing Traianus Pater, then it offers up interesting evidence as the only surviving portrait of a male blood relation of the emperor. Even so, it conforms with the united family image presented within the *Panegyricus*: the old man's pursed, thin lips are an Ulpian characteristic that united the

72. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, 179; for neo-verism as it applies to Flavian portraiture in general (but with emphasis upon Vespasianic portraiture), see 17–18.

73. If entry 6 from volume 3 of K. Fittschen and P. Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Porträts in den Capitolinischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom* (Mainz, 1983), is to be identified as Plotina—and the authors are happy to state that the association is not certain—then we have an example of a less conservative coiffure for Plotina. However, in order to reconcile the face to its remarkable hair, Fittschen and Zanker have indicated that it could only have been an earlier type of Plotina in her mid-30s, which places the date of such a portrait at the very outset of Trajan's reign or even prior to his sole rule as Augustus. In any case, this type is at odds with Plotina's usual representation and is to be taken as an intermediate step between the typically Flavian and Ulpian hairstyles.

74. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, 212.

75. E. D'Ambra, *Art and Identity in the Roman World* (London, 1998), 105.

76. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, 212; D. E. E. Kleiner and S. B. Matheson, eds., *I Claudia: Women in Roman Art* (New Haven, Conn., 1996), 68; D'Ambra, *Art and Identity* (n. 75 above), 105.

family visually and is featured on all of its members regardless of blood ties. Furthermore, his hair, though receding, attempts to echo Trajan's own comma-shaped formation above the forehead. These features, and above all, the fact that the sharp left-facing turn of the head suggests that it once looked to the middle of a dynastic group portrait (which certainly included Trajan), place the bronze securely within that image of the imperial family offered up by Pliny—a united family, devoted to its emperor, in which dissension was unthinkable.

IIC. Inscriptions, Statues, and Architectural Propaganda

Further visual propaganda, in the form of inscriptional evidence, statue dedications, and architecture, is consistent in its support of two conclusions: primarily, that members of the imperial family had an exceedingly subordinate role within the official image projected by the emperor, and that they were never, as a rule, honored independently of Trajan himself. Even within the context of Mary Boatwright's 1991 collection of inscriptions and dedications—gathered to indicate the low profile of the imperial women of the period—the ladies of the Ulpian house are conspicuous by their general absence.⁷⁷ Within Roman Italy and in the period 98–117, Plotina is incontestably the recipient of one dedication in which she is *not* represented as part of a family group: at Aricia, near Alba Longa, erected by a certain Agathyrus *Aug. lib.* (*CIL* 14.2161). A fragmentary inscription at Ostia raises the possibility of a second (*CIL* 14.5324). More in keeping with the official line reflected within the *Panegyricus*, however, is an inscription at Luna (c. 104–5), in which a dedication to IMP. CAES. NERVAE TRAIANO AUG. GER. DACICO PONT. MAX. TR. POT. IX COS. V is flanked on the left by the words PLOTINAE AUGUST. and on the right by MAR[C]IANAE AUG.⁷⁸ The many titles of the emperor stand in contrast to his wife's and sister's, whose full names are not even completed.⁷⁹ When the Arch at Ancona was dedicated (c. 114–15), the architrave of the arch featured the same formula as the Luna inscription, with the exceptions that now the Senate's praise and Trajan's refulgent titulature extended to seven lines, and that both Plotina and the deceased Marciana were explicitly defined in relation to the *paterfamilias*: PLOTINAE AUG. CONIUG. AUG. on the right of the emperor, DIVAE MARCIANAE AUG. SORORI AUG. on his left.⁸⁰

III. CONCLUSION

The public image and the actual circumstances of being a member of the first family are not to be confused. The preceding analysis does not seek to imply that Plotina, Marciana, and Matidia (let alone Nerva and Traianus

77. Boatwright, "Imperial Women" (n. 32 above).

78. E. M. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian* (Cambridge, 1966), no. 106.

79. Indeed, were it not for the testimony of the *Epit. de Caes.* (42.21), we would be unaware of Plotina's gentile name, Pompeia.

80. Smallwood, *Documents* (n. 78 above), no. 387.

Pater) did not wield enormous power, or that they did not act as powerful patrons to members from every class within Roman society, or even (as has been argued on the basis of their official public image⁸¹) that their role, status, or power were diminished in comparison to previous imperial women. Far from it. It is inconceivable that each member of the family could have been without real power, enormous wealth, status, and influence. But, as with Trajan's propaganda of personal status (and intimately linked with his ostensible relationship with the Senate), it was expedient for him to advertise a certain image of his family, no matter how transparently duplicitous this may have appeared to his contemporaries. Almost as an afterthought (or, better, a prerequisite) to Trajan's own heroic image, the family is subordinated to its head: no one may achieve except Trajan, and all other members must appear content in their subservience no less than in their devotion. Trajan appears in the *Panegyricus* and in the visual propaganda of the period as a monolith: he must be seen to exercise control over his wife and sister so that the court may appear impervious to factional groups. After all, in the period 98–117, Domitian's assassination was still fresh in public memory, and that act was perpetrated by means of a court conspiracy in which his wife was believed to have taken part.⁸²

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81. Boatwright, "Imperial Women," *passim*.

82. The generous assistance of Suzanne Dixon was instrumental in the composition of this article. The conclusions reached here do not necessarily reflect her views. Nevertheless, I would like to take this opportunity to thank both her and Brian Jones for their long-standing support and guidance.