



Livia: First Lady of Imperial Rome

By Anthony A. Barrett

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This is the first biography in English of one of Rome's most famous and infamous women, Livia (58 BC-AD 29), wife of Augustus and mother of Tiberius, who dominated imperial politics for decades. The first half of the study presents a chronological history of her extraordinary life followed by a thematic exploration of the huge influence she had which was a continuous source of contention between Livia and Tiberius. Almost half of the book comprises appendices, sources and notes, leaving the first part of the study more accessible to general readers. This is a scholarly work which strives to correct the lasting impression that Robert Graves (in *I Claudius*) has left of a manipulative murderess.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Barrett, who has written biographies of Caligula and Agrippina, here reconstructs the life of a noteworthy Roman historical figure about whom little direct information is available. Livia maintained a "deliberate reserve" throughout her life and was steadfastly committed to being the Emperor Augustus's wife. Much has been suggested about the influence she had on her husband during his tenure, and common belief holds that she deliberately poisoned his successors. Barrett counters the mostly negative attacks on her character, arguing that much of what has been said about her is spurious. As such, those responsible for documenting the imperial family, such as the historian Tacitus, get scrutinized. Barrett explores other facets of Livia's personality, such as her interest in horticulture and political patronage. The book presents the general politics of the time and highlights other key figures from imperial Rome. Surprisingly, Livia was highly regarded by the Roman Senate, as well as by other peers, who often commended her for her generosity. Barrett's work is probably denser and more detailed than would interest the average reader, but for those keenly interested in studying ancient Rome it comes as a welcome addition to the genre. Recommended for academic libraries.

Isabel Coates, CCRA-Toronto West Tax Office, Mississauga, Ont.

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Review

Barrett is an assured and often amusing guide. -- *Mark Golden, Globe and Mail (Toronto)*

Barrett's excellent life of Livia...forms a worthy companion to his earlier biography, Agrippina. -- (*Choice*)

From the Back Cover

"In his previous books on Caligula and Agrippina, Anthony Barrett has amply proven his competence as an imperial biographer. Now he adds an excellent biography of Livia-as appealing to the general reader as it is satisfying to the scholar." -Colin M. Wells, Trinity University, San Antonio

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