

Newlands, C. (2016) “Becoming a ‘Diva’ in Imperial Rome: Ovid and the Problem of the ‘First Lady’”, *Humanities Australia* 7, 80-93.

This essay explores the background to Livia’s desire to become a *diva*, the Latin term for a mortal woman who was deified. It examines the crisis in female representation occasioned by this novel emergence of a woman of power and influence in Roman life. Deification of prominent Roman leaders has been treated in scholarship as largely a masculine phenomenon, but it was an important female phenomenon also to which Ovid in his late poetry, the *Fasti* and exile poems, gave his attention by experimenting with fresh terminology to describe the multiple roles embraced by Livia as mother, spouse, and political patron. After her death, Livia provided the model for future wives of emperors, a model, moreover, that continues to shadow debate on the public representation of women today. Through the career of Livia, we can observe how gender, as Ovid well understood, became an important tool of imperial politics. Becoming a *diva* in imperial Rome, therefore, needs to be understood in terms of social dynamics, gender asymmetry, and social and political change.