

RIC III 353a

This is a fairly common coin type, catalogued as *RIC* III 353a by numismatic societies (H. Mattingly, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, volume III, coin type 353a). It is a silver Roman denarius that commemorates the death in 140/141 CE of Faustina the Elder, niece of the emperor Hadrian, aunt of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, and wife of the emperor Antoninus Pius. It was struck in Rome sometime between Faustina's death in 140/141 and Antoninus' death in 161.

On the obverse is a bust of Faustina, wearing a diadem (I think), with the legend DIVA FAVSTINA, which identifies this coin as a commemoration of her deification.

On the reverse is an empty throne behind a scepter and a peacock, symbols of the goddess Juno, and the legend AETERNITAS.

The deification coinage of Faustina endured for an extraordinarily long period, from her own death until the death of her husband (and even after). Her husband was apparently very fond of her: 30% of the silver coins struck during the rule of Antoninus depicted Faustina on the obverse.

The obverse of this coin type is almost always the same, save for the style of the hair and the existence or not of a veil and diadem, but the reverse appears in many different forms (a temple, the goddesses Ceres, Juno, Providentia, Vesta, Pietas, Aeternitas, etc.). This particular version, with the peacock and other accoutrements of Juno, constitutes only 4% of the total. The associations with Juno, along with the legends DIVA and AETERNITAS, emphasize the deification of Faustina, an honor formally bestowed by the Roman Senate at the request of her husband. Faustina is depicted being apotheosized as Juno, as it were.

At 19 millimeters in diameter and 3.14 grams in weight this coin is slightly larger and heavier than most of its kind.

Its condition would probably be regarded as *Very Fine*: the details and letters are clearly visible, though there is some uneven wear. Comparable coins are selling in today's market for around \$150.