

## Chapter 7

### Optima Mater

#### Power, Influence, and the Maternal Bonds between Agrippina the Younger (AD 15–59) and Nero, Emperor of Rome (AD 54–68)<sup>1</sup>

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#### Introduction

On his ascension in AD 55, the first password Nero gave his guard was *Optima Mater*, or “Best of Mothers,”<sup>2</sup> perhaps an acknowledgment that he owed his position, at age 17, not just to his mother’s tireless efforts over the years to see him hold the highest public office in Rome but because of the very blood that ran in his veins. Through her he had a powerful lineage: she was a direct descendent of the emperor Augustus. Had she done nothing else but stood demurely in the background, this bloodline alone gave the young Nero a tremendous advantage to holding rightfully the office of emperor.

Agrippina’s role as mother is intriguing: was she “the best” only by chance of birth, or because she acted, in her own way, according to the traditional role of the dutiful Roman mother? The three principle sources for this period, Suetonius, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius, complained that rather than guiding her son and remaining in the background she was a *mater impotens* and behaved “unnaturally,” that is, she contradicted all aspects of the traditional role expected for a Roman mother, usually at the expense of the reputation of the men close to her.<sup>3</sup> Frustrated by her own lack of official power, keen on self-preservation, the *mater impotens* attempted to wield power through her son. There were no official outlets for an intelligent,

ambitious woman to command political authority, but in her domestic role as wife and mother, a woman could command unofficial political authority through her husband and son(s); Agrippina wittingly exploited this role and set new precedents for future imperial women.

This chapter examines Agrippina against the paradigm of the ideal Roman mother and focuses specifically on the mother–son bond between Agrippina and Nero. Despite breaking with all precedent on the honors, influence, and authority a Roman woman could exert publicly and officially, Agrippina’s activities occurred within the framework of the traditional mother–son relationship strongly ingrained in upper-class Roman society, a bond generally of great mutual benefit. Her importance as mother benefited her husband Claudius, as she brought to the marriage not only an heir to stabilize his rule but a direct descendent of Augustus to elevate it. Son Nero recognized that importance of his matrilineal descent by publically referencing himself as the son of Agrippina. This chapter will consider, too, the breakdown of this relationship: the most intriguing aspect of Agrippina and Nero’s case is that five years after he declared her the “best of mothers” he had her murdered.

Agrippina’s emotional bond with Nero rested on her nurturing and imbued him with the qualities of her illustrious house; she supplied tutors and oversaw his earliest education, and she continued to support his political career after she married Claudius, overseeing his adoption and preparation for public life. The ideal Roman mother worked for the good of the state and was content to remain a pillar of support behind the scenes, but here Agrippina diverted from the ideal and openly worked toward Nero’s accession as emperor, and, with him, she attempted to continue to exercise public power as she had with Claudius. The bond between Roman mothers and their sons ideally rested on the sons’ devotion, gratitude, and obedience. Such was Agrippina’s

authority and influence as a political patron, however, that Nero resented her interference once he came of age: his rebellion against her was a combination of asserting his adulthood and a fear of her as a credible threat to his imperial position. Agrippina maintained an iron grip on Nero because, as she continually reminded him, he *owed* her for his position: the sources sensationalize this as arrogance, yet, as an inexperienced youth when he succeeded Claudius, he needed her formidable experience, public support, and influence in the early years of his reign. When he asserted his independence, Agrippina allegedly tried to intimidate him by supporting other “sons.” While there is certainly an argument to be made that Agrippina did work hard to secure Nero’s position, he did owe her for her bloodline that put him into that position of power. That debt was one Nero could never fully repay, and Agrippina nagged Nero about his obligatory gratitude. Indeed, shortly after Nero became emperor, he gave his mother a fine robe selected from those owned by former imperial women, and she snapped that “[he] was doling out a mere fraction of what he owed her . . . [and] some put a sinister construction on her words.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Sources: Old and New**

The character of the model Roman mother and her relationship with her sons comes from the words of male rhetoricians of the late Republic and early Empire. Exemplary women begin to appear in the historical record after the second century BC.<sup>5</sup> They fit a literary type: the virtuous mother, the willful mistress, the wicked stepmother, the “masculine woman” (*dux femina*),<sup>6</sup> or the barbarian.<sup>7</sup> Criticism of particular women in these works reflects aristocratic, male authors’ argument of the consequences when a weak-willed man allowed a head-strong woman to assume political control—especially in descriptions of the Julio-Claudians. In the case of Agrippina, until recently, scholarship cast her as a wicked stepmother and emasculating “stage-parent,” as

historians tended to rely heavily on contemporary literary sources. Into the twentieth century, scholars claim Agrippina desired only to be *mater* of an emperor<sup>8</sup> or acted simply out of selfishness.<sup>9</sup> Agrippina herself has been benefited from recent reevaluation.<sup>10</sup> Unlike earlier scholarship, which takes Agrippina's atrocious behavior uncritically (if not as a commentary on their own times), Agrippina's modern scholars have sought answers for her behavior not by casting her as a victim of circumstance but rather by considering her action as those of a woman determined to survive in a man's world.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Optima Mater, Mater Impotens: Mothers and Sons***

Tacitus summarizes succinctly the characteristics of the ideal mother: first of all, she flourished in the “good old days” of the Republic.<sup>12</sup> He lists several prominent *matres* suitable for emulation—Cornelia (Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus), Aurelia (Julius Caesar), and Atria (Augustus). The ideal mother–son relationship was one of selfless duty to nurture and promote her son, even at her own sacrifice: After Nero's birth, Agrippina consulted an astrologer who informed her that Nero would ultimately rule but that he would also kill her. Agrippina's response was, “Let him slay that he might reign.”<sup>13</sup> Usually the relationship was not that demanding, however; the mother was visible in her son's life, but in the background at home, and certainly not in the Senate house, assembly, and forum. Her most important job was to produce and devote herself to raising good citizens for the Roman state to ensure the continuity of the old traditions and general public welfare. Cornelia, daughter of Scipio, was the gold standard by which a mother's devotion to her sons was measured. In Tacitus's *Dialogues*, she is the exemplar of motherhood especially as she was well educated and surrounded herself with scholars.<sup>14</sup> She exemplified both the conservative values of a Republican woman as well as the

maternal pride that was expected of a Roman *mater* possessed of *gravitas*, good breeding, and devotion to her sons:

When a Campanian matron who was staying with Cornelia, *mater* of the Gracchi, was showing off her jewels—the most beautiful of that period [—] Cornelia managed to prolong the conversation until her children got home from school. Then she said, “*These are my jewels.*”<sup>15</sup>

T. Gracchi’s widow mother guided her sons’ education and political careers, and she was famous during the Republic and early Empire for a collection of letters that she wrote to them with counsel on their public careers.<sup>16</sup> Always appropriately modest, she supported their careers without active interference, and her “noble nature . . . [and] honourable ancestry” prevented vulgar displays of emotion when her sons were killed.<sup>17</sup> Cornelia’s own parentage was extremely important, especially as she was a widow: while a mother nurtured her child, its innate nature came from her father through her blood. Widow Cornelia was thus frequently identified as the daughter of Scipio Africanus: his blood flowed through her son’s veins.<sup>18</sup> Agrippina also gave similar paternal identifiers as a reminder that she was not only the daughter of Germanicus but also a direct descendant of Augustus.<sup>19</sup>

A good Roman mother’s bond with her son began as she regulated her son’s earliest studies and occupations with appropriate piety and modesty.<sup>20</sup> The Romans expected respect and gratitude in return for a mother’s duty:

A man who is both good and great should remember the benefits that children receive from their parents, and he should repay these by honouring and respecting them.<sup>21</sup>

So strong were these emotional bonds and the obligation of obedience and devotion they incurred that even the remorseless Coriolanus, poised to attack Rome, was swept away by a flood of emotion when his *mater* marched into his camp and confronted him<sup>22</sup> with a good dose of filial guilt:

You [Coriolanus] shall never attack Rome unless you trample first upon the dead body of the *mater* who bore you.<sup>23</sup>

With cries of “*Mater, mater*, what have you done?”<sup>24</sup> Coriolanus backed down, and Rome was saved.

One discussion point on the bond between mother and son among early imperial writers was whether there was genuine “mother-love” between mothers and sons, or whether the force of the bond was one of moral obligation. Republican Roman mothers were not meant to be loving models anyway, but rather models of discipline and Roman virtue.<sup>25</sup> Love was a soft sentiment to be kept for one’s wet nurse<sup>26</sup>; it may have been a useless emotion perhaps for Agrippina, especially considering the difficulties she experienced during Nero’s birth.<sup>27</sup> The circumstances of her exile during her brother’s reign (37–41) may have also affected her relationship with Nero, perhaps changing their relationship, upon her return in 41, from need to one of fear of abandonment.

On Agrippina’s return from exile in 41, Nero once again “enjoyed . . . her powerful influence.”<sup>28</sup> Agrippina herself admitted that fear was the basis of her power over Nero: she criticized her rival Domitia for securing the child Nero’s favor through kind words and indulgences while Agrippina was *trux et minax*—severe and menacing.<sup>29</sup> Abandoned at such a

vulnerable age, Nero himself must have suffered separation trauma, surely—first from his mother, then this aunt whose devotion was enough to alarm Agrippina. She must have had some success fear: at the age of ten, Nero testified in court against his beloved Domitia to please his *mater*.<sup>30</sup> The issue here was not whom Nero was going to love, cherish, and call “mama,” so much as Agrippina’s concern that she needed to raise a son emotionally dependent on her especially as Agrippina’s accusations came in 54, more than 14 years after Nero had lived with his aunt. Such accusations are probably more indicative of the underlying rivalry between Agrippina and the Domitians and Agrippina’s determination to wreak havoc on that branch of that family, especially as Claudius’s natural heir Britannicus was also nephew to that Domitia.<sup>31</sup> Agrippina knew well how fickle members of her own family could be to one another in the nest of vipers that was the imperial palace,<sup>32</sup> and the young, well-bred Nero would have been potentially a political weapon for—or threat to—any ambitious member of the family.

Agrippina immediately saw to Nero’s education and found him excellent teachers.<sup>33</sup> He had had a couple of tutors while she was in exile; in his sensational report of Nero’s upbringing, Suetonius remarks that Domitia had employed a pair of winners for the little boy—one was allegedly a dancer and the other a barber.<sup>34</sup> They were dismissed on Agrippina’s return and respectable instructors found: in 47, when Nero was around ten years old, Agrippina and her second husband Pascennius hired Asconius Labeo, and, after she married a third husband Claudius, she engaged the renowned writer Seneca for the pre-teen Nero.<sup>35</sup> These men were chosen for their good character and education to prepare her son (and stepson) for the basics of public life. Gossip alleged that Seneca wrote all of Nero’s early public speeches: “Older men . . . noted that Nero was the first ruler to need borrowed eloquence.”<sup>36</sup> Agrippina may have used both boys’ tutors to

covertly increase her own political position. Seneca, for example, was not chosen merely for his teaching skills: by having him recalled from exile, Agrippina placed him in her debt, and she felt that he could help her in her plans for supremacy.<sup>37</sup> The same was likely with fellow tutor Burrus—he was Nero’s tutor, but also in charge of the Praetorians,<sup>38</sup> which gave her a powerful influence over the palace guards because of her patronage of their commander. Seneca and Burrus, however, became something of a problem as both men, while not friends, united against Agrippina’s domination.<sup>39</sup> Both wanted to wield influence over Nero, and both felt constricted by Agrippina looming over them.<sup>40</sup>

Agrippina also saw to her stepson’s education: she had all of Britannicus’s tutors banished, alleging that they were subversive; Claudius agreed to place his son in the care of his new wife’s nominees.<sup>41</sup> This mundane domestic move on Claudius’s part highlights Agrippina’s maternal merits: when Narcissus strove to convince Claudius that a marriage to his niece would be a good match, one of the things the freedman stressed was that she would be a surrogate mother to his own children.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Claudius was urged to unite himself with “the lustre of [her] family” and that within that family Agrippina came out first because she was a mother: that is, she brings to Claudius’s household the grandson of Germanicus.<sup>43</sup> Such statements are contrary to the sources’ sensational account of the relationship between Agrippina and her new family.<sup>44</sup> Family-centric propaganda, approved by Claudius, belies the accounts of his new wife’s wickedness and that he had fallen under her spell and influence. For example, at least a couple of provincially issued coins depicted the boys together, and Nero features in a statue group with Claudius’s surviving children, including Britannicus (found at the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias). As Tacitus notes, Claudius sanctioned Agrippina’s partnership in his rule and to allow her to sit in state before the Roman



standards—there was precedent for a woman to do so, and as the empire had been created by her ancestors (i.e., Augustus),<sup>45</sup> it would be advantageous for Claudius's own image and position by association with her and to reinforce his own image the Augustan/Germanican pedigree of his wife and stepson. As for Agrippina, there simply was no political advantage for her to mistreat Britannicus; if anything, evidence suggests that they may have got on to some extent—Agrippina began to support Britannicus in 55 when she felt that Nero no longer respected her, and she threatened to have Nero removed as emperor to be replaced by his younger stepbrother. Considering that Nero recognized hypocritical friendliness in his mother when she behaved in a kind and loving manner toward him, had she suddenly begun to treat Britannicus with kindness after years of alleged abuse, Nero would have seen right through the charade and not been alarmed by his mother's threats.<sup>46</sup>

As Claudius married Agrippina because of the strength and stability her pedigree gave to his own position as emperor, her son, who was also directly descended from Augustus and Germanicus, provided him with an heir of equally strong pedigree.<sup>47</sup> Nero was quickly adopted (AD 50), married into the family (to his stepsister Octavia in 53), and given opportunities to be seen in public with his stepfather: he was featured at games and public spectacles, he was given a chance to speak publically, and he was present at imperial receptions.<sup>48</sup> After a bread riot in 53, when Claudius was ill, Agrippina made it known that Nero was prepared to succeed should anything happen to the emperor—perhaps not as sinister as Dio Cassius believed, but rather a positive message to the Roman people that the succession was stable and peace assured.<sup>49</sup> Tacitus (and Dio Cassius) assured their readers that Agrippina was promoting her son as well as herself, unchecked, to the great neglect of Britannicus,<sup>50</sup> but Nero's accolades and promotions<sup>51</sup> were

sanctioned by Claudius; the sudden realization of Claudius that his young son was being wickedly treated, and Agrippina's fear that all of her ambitious work would be undone, was questionable in the face of this other evidence.<sup>52</sup> Nero was not old enough in AD 51 to co-rule with his stepfather, but it was made clear, and with approval of the Senate, that he was being trained to succeed<sup>53</sup>—hence his title *princeps iuventutis*, “first among the youth,” a title once held by Augustus's grandson and heir Lucius, another reminder not only of stability but of Nero's direct descent from Augustus and all that the relationship implied. Thus, while Agrippina may appear bossy and ambitious when she urged Claudius to let the Senate and the people know by imperial proclamation that the underaged Nero was capable of running the state,<sup>54</sup> she was in fact acting according to traditions of a good helpmeet and as a mother who had prepared and promoted her son for service to Rome.

Nevertheless, the sources criticized Agrippina's support of her son during her marriage to Claudius and after his death, despite her following in the tradition of the supportive mother of Republican antecedents. Once she was Claudius's widow, Agrippina was criticized for her boundless ambition including an attempt to co-rule openly with Nero<sup>55</sup> (allegedly because she desired supreme power).<sup>56</sup> Agrippina now became the *mater impotens*, and even Nero himself was exasperated by her “feminine conceit” (*superba mulieribus*).<sup>57</sup> A precedent and possible influence on Agrippina for this sort of ambitious behavior may be found close to home in Agrippina's own mother, Agrippina the Elder (14 BC–AD 33), perceived as a political threat due to her retinue of supporters and an alleged desire to become empress<sup>58</sup>—even Agrippina the Younger did not go that far.<sup>59</sup> Instead, Agrippina Minor's case was complex: while she certainly seemed accustomed to enjoying a position of power (if not almost co-rule), her behavior with Nero suggested that she

never regarded him as a competent adult, hence she continued to upstage him even as he moved to assert himself. In one sense, who could blame her—he was quite young, and mothers do have difficulty seeing their adult children as peers.

Such of the impetus for her behavior perhaps came from her tenure as Claudius's wife: on the one hand, she acted openly, and with official sanction, as a co-ruler in all but name. Drawing a contrast between the wild Messalina (who had treated the empire as if it were a toy—*rebus Romanus inludenti*), Tacitus describes imperial rule under Claudius and Agrippina as a “changed state” and a *virile servitum* or an “almost-masculine” tyranny (*servitas ac saepius superba*).<sup>60</sup> Claudius's own propaganda machine reflected this change as well, for example, with the depiction of Agrippina with him on coins and on the *Gemma Claudia*; additionally, Agrippina received the title of *Augusta*,<sup>61</sup> the first wife of a living emperor to hold the title; she had a colony of veterans named after her (in honor that the *colonia* was also her birthplace) in AD 50<sup>62</sup>; and she sat in state with Claudius to take homage from the defeated Caractacus.<sup>63</sup> Tacitus refers to such events as unprecedented, and that Agrippina “claimed a partnership in empire”—yet the position was sanctioned in the artwork and coins commissioned by Claudius.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Nero was only 16 when he became emperor and had under his belt little political experience beyond the formal steps (not to mention no military experience) that had been taken to groom him as heir. For example, she had worked hard to have Claudius recognize and adopt Nero as his successor (at the expense of his own son).<sup>65</sup> Nero was dressed in his manly toga early so that he would appear qualified for a political career immediately,<sup>66</sup> given a consulship and allowed to dress as a triumph-winner at the circuses. Nero's marriage to Octavia<sup>67</sup> also strengthened family ties between him and Claudius. The sources make Agrippina appear the puppet master, carefully stage-managed a

number of political events to promote Nero while allegedly leaking out notices that Britannicus was a gibbering idiot, if not already dead.<sup>68</sup> (Britannicus, in fact, had a sharp tongue in his mouth and intelligent head on his shoulders.<sup>69</sup>) Nevertheless, there was again sanction from Claudius, as having the grandson of Germanicus and an heir to Augustus ready and waiting in the wings was extremely beneficial to his own rule; Nero's image and public appearances were carefully balanced not to overpromote him, but rather to show that he was ready in case something happened to the aging Claudius.<sup>70</sup> Even Nero's youth and lack of actual practical power was not a detriment: Nero was perceived as a blank slate who might herald the start of a Golden Age, one fresh, vigorous, and completely separate from the corruption that plagued the reign of Claudius.<sup>71</sup>

So it is understandable that at this point she did not recognize Nero as a competent adult, and that the boy-emperor needed strong guidance until he grew into the role of emperor. The difficulty was that she seemed unable to grasp when Nero was ready to rule on his own as early as 55, and five years into his reign (i.e., by 59), he wanted to rule as an adult and not as a child with his tutors and mother standing over him. Agrippina failed to see the man beyond the child, and she wanted Nero to continue to recognize her for his political advancement; her influence over his early political career made him very much her obliging client especially as she had had, for a time, more political experience and acumen than he did. And Nero did acknowledge the debt that he owed his mother strongly early in his reign. He flaunted his lineage through the maternal line; Agrippina appeared on coins with him, and the inscriptions emphasized that she was mother to Nero or daughter to Germanicus. As Claudius did, Nero's imagery emphasized dynastic stability, and he did acknowledge her role in that regard.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, the problem facing the adult Nero was that while “[Agrippina] could give her son the empire [she] could not endure him as emperor.”<sup>73</sup> If one looks at this from the point of view of the *mater impotens* and her agenda, it is not so much Agrippina’s reluctance to give up power but to give up treating Nero as a child who needed a regent. By all reports, he had grown up terribly spoiled and indulged,<sup>74</sup> thus in catering to his youthful inexperience she had little confidence in his abilities: she was severe and competent; he was a young man more interested in games, music, and lavish spending than politics.<sup>75</sup> If Agrippina failed at anything as a mother, it was that she did not instill into Nero the same characteristics that got her criticized as “too masculine”—her character in a man would have been admirable.

Nero also rankled under his mother’s smothering domination, and he, too, threatened to abdicate and retire to Rhodes as a way to embarrass her.<sup>76</sup> Agrippina, with her ceaseless reminders to her son on his debt of gratitude to her, caused him to rebel—perhaps as any teenager might. Nero seemed to have had an insatiable need for praise and approval<sup>77</sup> and was “above all . . . carried away by a craze for popularity”<sup>78</sup>—perhaps because he did not receive it growing up.<sup>79</sup> When Agrippina *did* shower him with love and kind words, his friends warned him to be wary, and he was instantly suspicious of her.<sup>80</sup> Yet when *he* treated *her* kindly and lovingly, she fell completely for the ruse<sup>81</sup>—in other words, mother-love instead of distance and dignity was suspect, but devotion and gratitude from the child was expected.<sup>82</sup>

After Agrippina’s death in 59, Nero gave a speech listing her crimes, including that she had exceeded her boundaries in her desire for power.<sup>83</sup> Perhaps she did go too far in her assumption that she had superiority over him in her position as his mother<sup>84</sup> and that she could rule with Nero as she had with Claudius. The difficulty Agrippina had with Nero was that she

expected to continue to play a guiding role, and this is where she superseded the traditional role as mother.<sup>85</sup> Her long experience of wielding power and rule compounded the tension, and her mindset may have resulted from habit and from her own conditioning and rare privileges of adulation she herself had enjoyed throughout her lifetime.<sup>86</sup> The need for separation of mother from son began almost at once when Nero became emperor in 54: in his debut speech (written by Seneca), he announced a new beginning for imperial rule where the household would be separate from the affairs of the state—no more “petticoat rule,” he stated in his imperial inaugural address<sup>87</sup>: he was going to separate domestic politics from the affairs of state, surely a strong reference to the public relationship exercised by Claudius and Agrippina. Despite this firm assertion, however, Agrippina continued to play a large role in the early years of Nero’s reign: the emperor, as mentioned, did stress his pedigree by sanctioning images, coins, and inscriptions that emphasized his matrilineal lineage.<sup>88</sup> Agrippina, however, had no intention simply of functioning a symbol of Nero’s inheritance: indeed, the new emperor needed a nudge from Seneca and Burrus physically to bar Agrippina from taking her place next to him the first time he met with an embassy, surely averting a precedence that could have been a political disaster.<sup>89</sup>

### **Nero Turns the Tables**

There is no clear-cut explanation why Nero finally decided to rebel against his mother first as early as 55, and then especially from 59<sup>90</sup>; Tacitus notes, however, that “All men yearned for the breaking of a mother’s power,”<sup>91</sup> and Nero resorted to murder to achieve it.<sup>92</sup> If Nero had been happy enough in his early reign to respect the experience of Seneca, Burrus, and even Agrippina, and if he were afraid to break the status quo and lose the political patronage and support of his mother, what prompted his fatal rebellion against her? Ideally, *matres* and sons never broke their

ties. Coriolanus, for example, was so devoted to his *mater* that he continued to live with her long after he married and had children.<sup>93</sup> Rebellion against a smothering mother was *not* unprecedented, but it was usually handled with care and tact on the part of the son.<sup>94</sup> To be fair to Nero, his initial response to separate himself from Agrippina was simply to remove her from the palace (along with any privileges she had enjoyed), dismiss her personal bodyguard, and to have his friends and hired thugs harass her at her house.<sup>95</sup> Nero's tactics may have been harsh, but the desire to be viewed by his subjects as an adult and not a child under a female regency—a sign of weakness once he was grown up—may have prompted such drastic measures.

Cracks in the bond between Nero and Agrippina began to appear around AD 55, about a year into his reign when Nero took a mistress. Nero despised his wife Octavia; theirs was an arranged marriage of *amicitia* to tie him more closely to his adopted father Claudius. He fell in love with Acte, a lower-class woman and an object of Agrippina's disapproval.<sup>96</sup> One point of interest is that Nero's relationship with Acte prompted a rare foray from Agrippina's into a "loving" behavior toward him, which was so out of character for Agrippina that Nero did not trust her at all.<sup>97</sup> In addition, any threats to his marriage to Octavia were most likely simply threats to Agrippina's dominance over him: Agrippina had engineered that marriage, and any erroneous behavior on Nero's part would undo the significance of Nero being Claudius's stepson and son-in-law and undermine if not make a mockery of Agrippina's role as his political patron.<sup>98</sup>

Nero's relationship with Acte was long-lasting,<sup>99</sup> but despite their close relationship and the provocation it caused Agrippina, there was no real threat that he would actually marry a freedwoman and thus undermine Nero's Claudian connections and Agrippina's hard work.<sup>100</sup>

More complicated was Nero's affair with Poppaea Sabina. Nero met Poppaea in 58, who may have been a catalyst for Nero finally to murder Agrippina: allegedly, strong-willed Poppaea refused simply to be Nero's mistress; as long as Agrippina was alive Nero could not divorce Octavia. Tacitus alleges that Poppaea manipulated him into abandoning his mother's dominance,<sup>101</sup> mocked him as a mama's boy and simply a child playing at emperor,<sup>102</sup> and forced his hand to order Agrippina's murder in 59.

Other events may have, however, inspired Nero to consider assassinating his *mater* long before Poppaea came along. One was partly fear that Agrippina had abandoned his cause as early as 55, supporting alternate candidates for the imperial position. One was the long-neglected Britannicus and then Rubellius Plautus in 55.<sup>103</sup> Here, Agrippina played the dishonored mother full force: Nero denied her the devotion and gratitude she deserved, so she would support "sons" who would.<sup>104</sup> The threat of Plautus as a rival was more complicated than Britannicus (whom he had murdered at dinner). With Plautus Nero seemed to fear Agrippina's growing power base; Tacitus remarks that Nero was desperate to have Agrippina killed consequently.<sup>105</sup> Burrus managed to calm Nero down and advised him to charge Agrippina with supporting a potential usurper, and so his mother faced the court. Despite its serious political implications, Tacitus cloaks the hearing and trial as an example of "women's quarrel" between Agrippina and Junia Silana, and Agrippina and Domitia the Younger.<sup>106</sup> Agrippina, who had been stripped of her privileges and supporters by Nero, used the last resource she had to defend herself and played the mother card at full throttle. Tacitus records Agrippina's speech in which she stresses her integrity as a mother. Silana, who had accused Agrippina of adultery with a freedman, "never [knew] maternity" and had "no knowledge of a mother's heart."<sup>107</sup> Domitia, who had competed with



Agrippina for Nero's affection, was accused of more interest in decorating her fish ponds than making the maternal sacrifices Agrippina had made on behalf of Nero.<sup>108</sup> If Agrippina seemed to support Britannicus or Plautus, she argued, it was out of mother-love for her son—and that Nero would understand her motives as a mother and forgive her:

I should be charged, not with occasional indiscretions—outbursts of uncontrollable love but with crimes which no one can pardon except a son!<sup>109</sup>

Thus Agrippina was reprieved. This speech calmed down both mother and son, and Silana was sent into exile.<sup>110</sup> Little is known subsequently of Agrippina's activities for the next four years. She reappears in the historical record in 59 when Tacitus notes that she no longer met with the emperor privately.<sup>111</sup>

The strength of the bond between Nero and his *mater*, however, was not to be severed easily. According to various sources, it took Nero no less than five attempts to kill her. He tried to poison her three times,<sup>112</sup> crush her in a newly gifted bed under a collapsible lead ceiling,<sup>113</sup> and drown her with a collapsible boat.<sup>114</sup> His tactics to set up Agrippina's fall were striking and reinforced what Agrippina believed of his role in the relationship. While Nero instantly suspected his mother when she was kind to him, she seemed to think that Nero had finally come to his senses and was giving her the respect that she deserved with such displays. After the attempt to drown her failed, however, Agrippina finally twigged that it was all a plot. Terrified on receiving word from Agrippina herself that she had survived her "accident" at sea, Nero sent assassins to stab her.<sup>115</sup>

After the deed was done, guilt consumed Nero.<sup>116</sup> Nero's order to have his mother murdered was an open secret lampooned by comedians and immortalized in graffiti and public vandalism.<sup>117</sup> The man who had quipped that mushrooms were the "food of the gods"<sup>118</sup> apparently tolerated the mockery even when it was performed brazenly in his face because, as Champlin points out, he knew he was guilty.<sup>119</sup> While he showed no remorse for killing anyone else, including two of his three wives, and that he allegedly fondled his mother's corpse and made lewd comments about her beauty,<sup>120</sup> he believed that Agrippina literally haunted him.<sup>121</sup> Significantly, he (or rather Seneca) drew up a posthumous list of Agrippina's crimes, including that she "had hoped for partnership in the Empire, for the praetorian cohorts to swear allegiance to a woman; for the Senate and the people to submit to a like ignominy."<sup>122</sup>

## Conclusions

Agrippina was like no other aristocratic Roman woman before her: uniquely as sister, wife, and mother to emperors. She commanded public respect not only from simply being the daughter of Germanicus and lineage from Augustus but also from her role as the weak-willed Claudius's helpmeet. Her position strengthened the wobbly political stability persisting from Claudius's ascension and added legitimacy and continuity to his, then Nero's, reign. Consequently, she commanded both a figurative and literal authority, and she had mown down anyone who stood between Nero and the imperial throne. She made it clear to Nero that if he did not show her appropriate gratitude in return for his lineage and her activities as his mother, then he was as expendable as anyone else.

And Nero *was* devoted to his mother; he owed her as both his mother and as his patron for his imperial position in a similar fashion the Republican heroes were tied to their own

influential mothers. On a practical level, he did need her experience and support to advance his political career, and he needed her presence, popularity, and competence to ensure his position as emperor. She continued, too, to maintain a stronger position than he even when he came of age and decided that he wished to rule without being overshadowed by his advisers or his mother.

In Nero's case, however, it was not love or devotion but instead fear that formed his bond to her—fear of the unofficial power and influence Agrippina wielded and fear that, because of his inheritance from her, he could not fully escape obligation to her. Nero feared losing his *mater's* patronage in support of his position. Physical separation and removal of Agrippina's supporters and power base was not enough; he needed Agrippina dead to protect his image as emperor and to allow him to rule on his own. While mothers could and did exert influence on their sons well into adulthood, Nero stood in a unique position: as emperor, he had to be seen as chief patron and authority; he could hardly be father of his country with a nagging mother hanging over him, keeping him a child and undermining his adult authority.

Nero thus severed the bonds with his mother with the finality of murder. Yet Agrippina's grip on him remained even after her assassination: he was filled with remorse and allegedly haunted by her specter. Facing her death, Agrippina herself reminded her assassins of the mother–son bond that had brought them to that moment, saying, “Strike *here* [indicating her womb], for *this* is the source of Rome's troubles.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This essay started life as a graduate school essay at the University of Virginia in 1990 under the supervision of my mentor Dr Elizabeth Meyer and which won the Nora Zeale Prize from the Department of Women’s Studies in 1991. Over the years, there has been quite a bit of tinkering, and a number of people have read through drafts and helped me pummel that original essay into something worthwhile of this project. I would like to thank my former University of Delaware colleague Professor Michael Rosenberg for his input and suggestions as well as the anonymous reviewer at the *Journal of Women’s History* whose tough-love but fantastic critical commentary of a rejected piece helped to reshape that draft into this one. Many thanks also to my current colleague Dr Elena Woodacre for all of her enthusiasm and hard work in helping to realise these two volumes. Final thanks go to the late Dr R. Beans, whose unconditional love and support is much missed.

<sup>2</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 9.

<sup>3</sup> Tacitus describes the Claudius's regime (*quasi virile servitute*) (Tac., *Ann.* 12.7), translated by J. Jackson in the Loeb edition as "a masculine tyranny," but Grant captures the nuance (and insult) of the *quasi* better, "an *almost*-masculine" regime (M. Grant, *Nero, Emperor in Revolt* [New York: American Heritage Press, 1985], 255). On **Agrippina's masculine behaviour**, see J. Ginsburg, *Representing Agrippina: Constructions of Female Power in the Early Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 112–115; F. Santoro L'Hoir, "Tacitus and Women's Usurpation of Power," *The Classical World* 88 (1994), 5–25; on Tacitus's use of *de virile servitute*, see F. Santoro L'Hoir, *Tragedy, Rhetoric, and the Historiography of Tacitus's Annales* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 111–157; on Tacitus's use of masculine terms to describe Agrippina, see L. W. Rutland, "Women as Makers of Kings in Tacitus' Annals," *The Classical World* 72 (1978), 22–29.

<sup>4</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 13.13.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see J. M. Carlon, *Pliny's Women: Constructing Virtue and Creating Identity in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); S. Dixon, *Reading Roman Women* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 16–25.

<sup>6</sup> See Ginsburg, *Representing Agrippina*, 112–115, on the significance of a female *dux*. See Santoro L'Hoir, *Tragedy Rhetoric*, 111–118, for a discussion of other masculine terms in the context of the perceived female usurper of power.

<sup>7</sup> Dixon, *Reading Roman Women*, 154.

<sup>8</sup> J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Roman Women* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1962), 117.

<sup>9</sup> Grant, *Nero*, 35.

<sup>10</sup> Suggested readings include B. Levick, *Claudius* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Mother of Nero* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1993); M. Griffin, *Nero: The End of a Dynasty* (London: Routledge, 1984); and E. Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). On reevaluation of women in ancient history, see, for example, S. Wood, *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images 40 BC–AD 68* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); M. Keltanen, "The Public Image of Four Empresses—Ideal Wives, Mothers and Regents?" in *Women Wealth and Power in the Roman Empire*. Vol. 25., ed. Paivi Setälä et al. (Rome: Acta Instituti Romani Finlandia, 2002), 105–145; and Freisenbruch (2011) **<AQ: This reference is not provided in Bibliography.>**. For monographs, see Barrett, *Agrippina*; Ginsburg, *Representing Agrippina*; and W. Eck, *Agrippina, die stadtgründerin Kölns. Ein Frau in der frühkaiserzeitlichen Politik* (Cologne, 1993).

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- <sup>11</sup> Recent reevaluations on Agrippina and Nero's behaviour include Barrett (1996), Ginsburg (2006), Griffin (1987), and Champlin (2005).
- <sup>12</sup> Tac., *Dial.* 28.
- <sup>13</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 14.9.
- <sup>14</sup> Barrett (1996), 6. On Cornelia, see S. Dixon, *Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi* (London: Routledge, 2007).
- <sup>15</sup> Val. Max., 4.4pr. See also R. Berg, "Wearing Wealth: Mulieribus and Ornatus as Status Markers for Women in Imperial Rome," in *Women, Wealth, and Power in the Roman Empire*, Vol. 25, ed. Paivi Setälä et al. (Rome: Acta Instituti Romani Finlandia, 2002), 15–73; E. Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Elite from Cornelia to Julia Domna* (London: Routledge, 1999) 76, 86–87; Carlon, *Pliny's Women*, 139–140.
- <sup>16</sup> On Cornelia's letters, see Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta*, 193–196.
- <sup>17</sup> Plut., *Gai. Gracc.* 19.
- <sup>18</sup> Barrett, *Agrippina*, 6–7.
- <sup>19</sup> Allegedly, Ahenobarbus suggested anything produced by the union between himself and Agrippina was bound to be "abominable" and a "public bane" (*quicquam ex se et Agrippina nisi detestabile et malo publico nasci potuisse*) (Suet., *Ner.* 6.1).
- <sup>20</sup> Tac., *Dial.* 28
- <sup>21</sup> Plut., *Cor.* 36.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.
- <sup>25</sup> Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta*, 68.
- <sup>26</sup> Nero's two nurses and Acte took charge of disposing of his remains (Suet., *Ner.* 50). See K. Bradley, "Wet-nursing at Rome: a Study in Social Relations," in *The Family in Ancient Rome*, ed. B. Rawlson (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 201–229, on the wet-nurse's role as substitute for mother-love.
- <sup>27</sup> Nero was a breech birth (Plin., *NH* 7.46). See also Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta*, 188; Barrett, *Agrippina*, 56–57, discusses briefly the contradictory prophecies associated with Nero's character.
- <sup>28</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 6.
- <sup>29</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.64.
- <sup>30</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 7.

<sup>31</sup> Griffin suggests Nero lived with **Domitia** for only a few months (*Nero*, 27). While the sources suggest that Agrippina's concerns highlight such a fear, her concern was more politically motivated: as a relative of Messalina and Britannicus, Domitia Lepida was surely a rival of Agrippina.

<sup>32</sup> Suet., *Calig.* 11.

<sup>33</sup> The **education of the Roman mother herself** was the cause of contemporary debate: she needed enough education to see to her son's earliest instruction, yet not so much that she would become "too masculine," damage her moral reputation (Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta*, 86–87, 219). **<AQ: Please clarify "yet no so much that she would..."> [added a 't' to make the sentence clearer]**

<sup>34</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 6. **Domitia** was very wealthy and surely would not have been so callously wanton in seeing to the young boy's formative care. Barrett suggests Nero had excellent tutors including Asconius Labeo, who was made Nero's tutor when his stepfather Passienus died in 47 (Barrett, *Agrippina*, 86).

<sup>35</sup> Suetonius remarks that Claudius himself chose Seneca (Suet., *Ner.* 7); Tacitus states that Agrippina assigned him (Tac., *Ann.* 12.8). On Seneca's role as Nero's formal tutor and instructor, see Barrett, *Agrippina*, 106; Griffin, *Nero*, 50–82.

<sup>36</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 13.3. See also Griffin, *Nero*, 76.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.2, 12.42.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.2.

<sup>40</sup> See Barrett, *Agrippina*, 156–160; Griffin, *Nero*, 71–82.

<sup>41</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.41, 13.2. **Britannicus received a good education**, as well; he had the same instructors and tuition as the future emperor Titus (Suet., *Tit.* 2.2).

<sup>42</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.2.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.6.

<sup>44</sup> Literary sources exaggerate **Agrippina's role as the wicked stepmother**; much of this sensationalism results from the accounts' juxtaposition of Agrippina and Messalina as rivals (see Barrett, *Agrippina*, 86–91). On Agrippina as the wicked stepmother (*saeva noverca*), see Ginsburg, *Representing Agrippina*, 107–111.

<sup>45</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.37.

<sup>46</sup> Nero and Agrippina's relationship was complex: on other occasions, the pair showed each other so much affection in public that it led to rumor of incest (e.g., Suet., *Ner.* 28.2)

<sup>47</sup> Agrippina's brother Gaius emphasized similarly his descent from Augustus by publicly honoring his mother and Augustus's granddaughter, Agrippina the Elder. See H. I. Flower, *The Art of Forgetting*:



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*Disgrace and Oblivion in Roman Political Culture* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 140–143.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.3.10

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Tacitus notes that anyone found supporting **Britannicus** disappeared (*Ann.* 12.41); the more rewards and dignity given to Agrippina and Nero, the worse Britannicus fared (*Ann.* 12.27). Dio Cassius also remarks that she removed or put to death anyone who was devoted to Britannicus (61.32.5) and that she entrusted him only to those who would harm him on her behalf (61.32.6), and that he was raised as if he were a “mere nobody” (61.32.41).

<sup>51</sup> For example, not only did Nero assume his manly gown shortly after Agrippina married Claudius, but he was dressed symbolically in a triumphal gown during a public spectacle, a donative was given to the troops in his name, and he was made “consul designate” until he turned 20, at which time he would assume the consulate with the Senate’s approval (*Tac. Ann.* 12.41). See J. Aveline, “The Death of Claudius,” *Historia* 53 (2004), 436–464; J. Osgood, *Claudius Caesar: Image and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 228–233.

<sup>52</sup> Dio Cassius (61.34.1). See also Barrett, *Agrippina*, 169–171; Levick, *Claudius*, 72–73, 77.

<sup>53</sup> One possibility was that Britannicus and Nero might be raised together in a manner not unlike Augustus’s promotion of his grandsons Gaius and Lucius (Osgood, *Claudius*, 226–227).

<sup>54</sup> Dio Cass., 61.10.3.

<sup>55</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.48–49.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.8.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.14.

<sup>58</sup> Suet., *Tib.* 53.

<sup>59</sup> On Agrippina the Elder’s ambitions, see Barrett, *Agrippina*, 30, 32–39.

<sup>60</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.7.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.26.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.27. Barrett points out that this was no mere honorific: the colony bore both Claudius and Agrippina’s names: *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*; it was a deliberate policy of Claudius to include her (*Agrippina*, 114–115).

<sup>63</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.37.

<sup>64</sup> On discussions of Agrippina and imagery, see, for example, Ginsburg, *Representing Agrippina*; Barrett, *Agrippina*, 108–111; Wood, *Imperial Women*, 210–217 and 289–314; and Osgood, *Claudius*, 211–224.

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<sup>65</sup> Suet., *Claud.* 39; Tac. *Ann.* 12.25.

<sup>66</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.41.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.58.

<sup>68</sup> Dio Cass. 61.10.

<sup>69</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.26.

<sup>70</sup> Osgood, *Claudius Caesar*, 228–233.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 245–254.

<sup>72</sup> On Agrippina's image and inscriptions, Ginsburg, *Representing Agrippina*, 55–105; Wood, *Imperial Women*, 255–270; Barrett, *Agrippina*, 215–229; M. Moltesen and A. M. Nielsen have compiled a selection of essays on artwork and sculpture that depict Agrippina and her family as well as depictions of Agrippina in modern film and on modern television shows in *Agrippina Minor: Life and Afterlife (Liv og eftermaele)* (New York: Carlsberg Glyptotek, 2007); Flower, *Art of Forgetting*, notes an inscription found in Cologne erected in 66 by one of the legions: here Nero is identified in detail in a description of his lineage back to Augustus, **stressing his legitimate descent** and position in the Julio Claudian family; this “unbroken genealogy” makes no reference to the complicated means of descent—and female connections—needed to create this genealogy (218). On the familial sculptures of Agrippina, Claudius, and Nero the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias, see R. R. R. Smith, “The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 77 (1987), 88–138. S. Wood discusses the precedence of Agrippina's role in imperial images during the reign of her brother in “Diva Drusilla Panthea and the Sisters of Caligula,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 99(1995), 457–482.

<sup>73</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 12.64.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.3.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.41.

<sup>76</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 34.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>79</sup> Barrett, *Agrippina*, 160, 165; Griffin, *Nero*, 45–46; Champlin, *Nero*, 237.

<sup>80</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 13.13.

<sup>81</sup> Dio Cass. 62.12.3.

<sup>82</sup> See Barrett, *Agrippina*, 152–153, 156; Griffin, *Nero, passant*.

<sup>83</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 14.9; according to Tacitus, Seneca Nero's speech.

<sup>84</sup> Barrett, *Agrippina*, 156–158; S. Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 187.

- <sup>85</sup> Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 186–187.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 107ff.
- <sup>87</sup> Barrett, *Agrippina*, 161; Dio Cass. 61.3.1; Tac., *Ann.* 13.4.
- <sup>88</sup> See Ginsburg, *Representing Agrippina*, 55–105; Wood, *Imperial Women*, 255–270; Barrett, *Agrippina*, 219–229.
- <sup>89</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 13.5.
- <sup>90</sup> See Barrett, *Agrippina*, 156ff; Griffin, *Nero*, 68–76; Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 177ff.
- <sup>91</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 14.1.
- <sup>92</sup> Graffiti that appeared in Rome compared Nero to famous matricides in literature, for example, “Orestes, Nero, Alcmeon, all matricides” (Dio Cassius, 62.16.2). Bizarrely, one of Nero’s favorite stage roles was to play Orestes, which he did often after his mother’s death (Champlin, *Nero*, 66–101).
- <sup>93</sup> Plut., *Cor.* 4.
- <sup>94</sup> Dixon, *The Roman Mother*, 188–192.
- <sup>95</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 34; Dio Cass. 59.8.6.
- <sup>96</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 13.12–13; see Barrett, *Agrippina*, 167–168.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.13. Sensational sources allege that **Agrippina and Nero shared a sexual relationship** (e.g. Suet. *Ner.* 28; Tac., *Ann.* 14.2), but credible evidence that Agrippina, while a stern, conservative woman, could be loving if she thought such behavior would result in political expediency (Tac., *Ann.* 12.7, 14.2).
- <sup>98</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 14.1. See Barrett, *Agrippina*, 160–161, 165–169 (on Nero’s “downgrading” of Claudius).
- <sup>99</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 50.1.
- <sup>100</sup> Suetonius notes that Nero, as he despised Octavia, took **Acte** as “all but” his lawful wife, and that he bribed several ex-consuls to perjure themselves that Acte was of royal birth (Suet., *Ner.* 28.1).
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.1–3. Nero in fact did not marry **Poppaea** until 62. On Tacitus habit of fudging dates for dramatic purpose, see G. G. Fagan, “Messalina’s Folly,” *The Classical Quarterly* 52 (2002), 570, n.17.
- <sup>102</sup> Barrett, *Agrippina*, 181ff. Nero did seem worried about his mother’s long, influential reach; supposedly he decided to kill Agrippina as he feared that exile would not guarantee his safety (Tac., *Ann.* 14.3).
- <sup>103</sup> Barrett, *Agrippina*, 155—Rubellius’s mother was Julia, the daughter of Drusus the Younger and Livilla, and granddaughter of the emperor Tiberius. **<AQ: Please clarify the sentence.>** He was also descended from Augustus through Julia, the emperor’s daughter, and her lover R. Blandus (whom she married in 33).
- <sup>104</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 13.20; Suet., *Ner.* 33; Dio Cass. 59.4.
- <sup>105</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 13.20.

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- <sup>106</sup> On the background to the rivalry between Agrippina and Silana and with Domitia, see Barrett. *Agrippina*, 74–75; Griffin, *Nero*, 174–176.
- <sup>107</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 13.21.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid., 13.22.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid., 14.3.
- <sup>112</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 34.
- <sup>113</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 14.4.
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid., 14.3–4.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid., 14.8. For a discussion of Agrippina’s death, funeral, and subsequent consequences (especially an analysis of Tac., *Ann.* 14.9), see M. T. Boatwright, “Tacitus and the Final Rites of Agrippina: Annals 14.9,” in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 14, ed. Carl Deroux. *Latomus Revue d’ études latines* (2008), 375–393.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid., 14.8.
- <sup>117</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 39; Dio Cass. 62.16.1–4.
- <sup>118</sup> Dio Cass. 61., preface 4.
- <sup>119</sup> Champlin, *Nero*, 92. On Nero’s reputation as and reaction to being a matricide, see 17–18, 89–92.
- <sup>120</sup> Dio Cass. 62.10.3; Suet., *Ner.* 28; Tac., *Ann.* 14.19.
- <sup>121</sup> Suet., *Ner.* 34; Dio Cass. 62.14.4.
- <sup>122</sup> Tac., *Ann.* 14.11.
- <sup>123</sup> Ibid., 14.10.