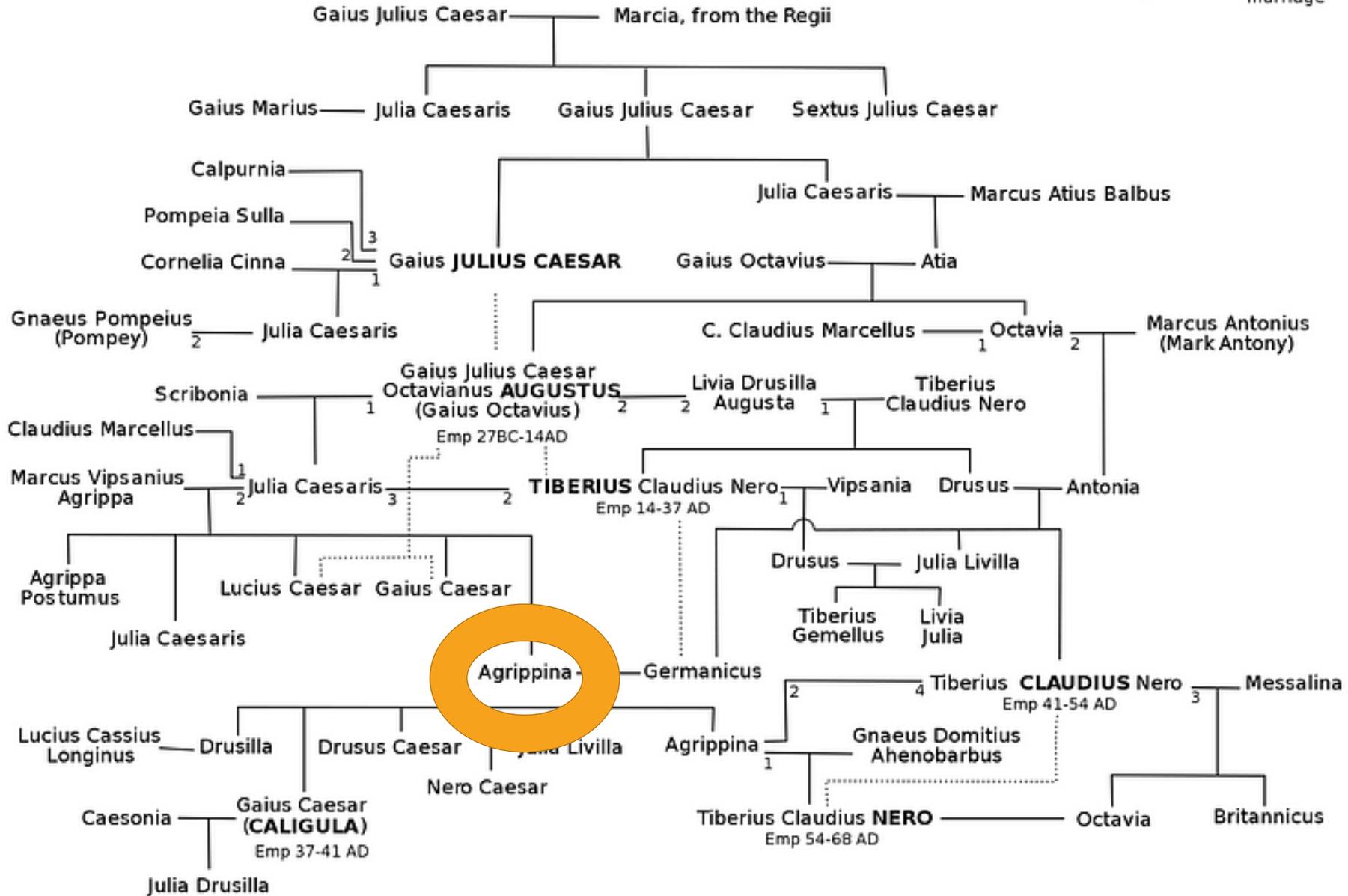


AGRIPPINA'S ARROGANT FECUNDITY

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Julio-Claudian Family Tree

| son/daughter Emp, emperor
 Dict, dictator
 adopted son
 — marriage 1,2,... number of marriage



THE DYNASTY, ENTHRONED



- Grand Camée de France, sardonyx cameo, 23 CE or 50-54 CE

**PREGNANCY:
A DANGEROUS FORM OF
POWER**

Votive pregnant female, terracotta, probably
Roman, 200 BCE – 200 CE, Science Museum
Group Collection, Object A634991



PREGNANCY AND PROSPECTIVE IMAGERY

Terracotta figurine of a pregnant woman on a birthing stool, 1st c. BCE, Ptolemaic Egypt

Findspot: Alexandria

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1992-0811-1



CHILDBIRTH

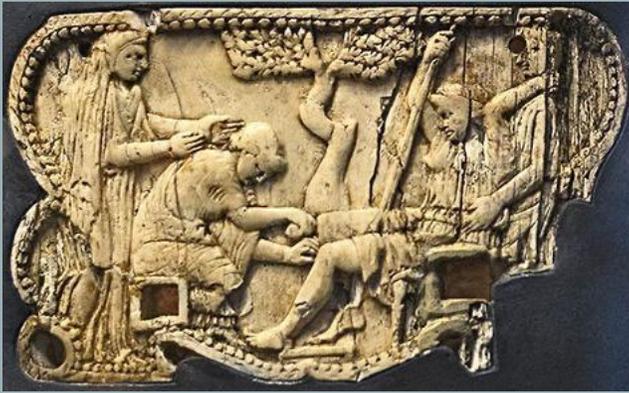
Terracotta relief from the tomb of Scribonia Attice and her husband Marcus Ulpius Amerimnus

Ostia Antica, 2nd c. CE (reign of Hadrian)

Epitaph indicates that Scribonia commissioned the tomb herself.

She was a midwife and her husband likely a surgeon (another relief depicts a leg amputation).





THE SYMBOLISM OF THE WOMB

Childbirth scene on an ivory plaque attached
to one end of papyrus winder

Roman, from Pompeii, Region I, Insula 2

1st c. CE

- Loyalty
 - (Laelius' speech, pledging to bury a blade in his wife's pregnant body if Caesar asked, *Luc. 1.377*)
- Treachery
 - (Agrippina the Younger's famous last words, "*protendens uterum, uentrem feri,*" *Tac. Ann. 14.8.5*)
- Fratricide
 - (Polynices and Eteocles, born of a single womb, *Stat. Theb. 11.408*)
- Corruption
 - (The vices of the city are all but conceived in the mother's womb, *Tac. Dial. 29.3*)
 - (cf. Augustus' daughter Julia's children were blessings neither to her nor the state, *Vell. Pat. 2.93.2*)
- Sycophancy
 - (The Senate voting for a Temple to Fecundity in honor of Poppaea Sabina, *Tac. Ann. 15.23.2*)
- Fertility
- See R. Ash. 2007. *Tacitus: Histories Book 2*. Cambridge. p. 114.

ROYAL BABIES AND PROSPECTIVE IMAGERY

Messalina holding the infant Britannicus,
Roman, marble, c. 45 CE

Based on Cephisodotos' statue of Eirene
holding the child Ploutos

Louvre accession number 010275377



ARCHETYPES OF HELLENISTIC QUEENSHIP: ARSINOE II AND PTOLEMY II

Gold octodrachm (*mnaieton*) with the draped and diademed jugate busts of Ptolemy I and Berenice I on the obverse as the divine parents of the siblings Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II on the reverse; the legends over the portraits read *Theōn* (“of the gods”) and *Adelphōn* (“of the siblings”) respectively (Alexandria, ca. 275-260 BC; Heritage Auction no. 3064, lot 30189). Photo courtesy of David S. Michaels, Heritage Auctions.

Description courtesy of

<https://www.ancientworldmagazine.com/articles/arsinoe-ii-philadelphus-archetype-hellenistic-queenship/>



ROMAN AND PTOLEMAIC INTERPRETERS: ANTONY AND HIS WIVES

IMAGE 1: Marc Antony and Octavia, 39 BCE, Ephesus,
Silver cistophorus

Obverse: jugate busts of Marc Antony and Octavia with
legend MANTONIVS IMP COS DESIC ITER ET TERT

Reverse: Dionysus on cista mystica interlaced with
snakes

RPC I 2202

IMAGE 2: Marc Antony and Cleopatra, 34-33 BCE,
Dora Phoeniciae, bronze tetradrachm

Obverse: jugate busts of laureate Cleopatra and Marc
Antony

Reverse: Tyche holding palm branch and caduceus

RPC 4752



AGRIPPINA THE YOUNGER, CO-RULING WIFE AND MOTHER

IMAGE 1:

Cistophorus from Ephesus, 50-51 CE

Obverse: TI CLAVD CAES AUG AGRIPP AVGVSTA; laureate head of Claudius and Agrippina the Younger, jugate portraits

Reverse: Diana Ephesia cult statue

RIC I (2nd ed.) Claudius 119



IMAGE 2:

Roman Aureus, 54 CE

Obverse: AGRIPP AVGV DIVI CL AVGV NERONIS CAES MATER

Busts of Nero and Agrippina the Younger facing each other

Reverse: NERONI CLAVD DIVI F CAES AVGV GERM IMP TR P

Legend surrounding oak wreath enclosing EX S C

RIC I (2nd ed.) Nero 1



IMAGE 3:

Roman Aureus, 55 CE

Obverse: NERO CLAVD DIVI F CAES AVGV GERM IMP TR P COS

Jugate busts of Nero and Agrippina the Younger

Reverse: AGRIPP AVGV DIVI CLAVD NERONIS CAES MATER EX S C

Quadriga of elephants bearing two chairs with figures of divine Claudius and divine Augustus, both radiate



PROSPECTIVE IMAGERY, CONCLUDED

Agrippina the Younger crowning
Nero with a laurel wreath
Agrippina carries a cornucopia;
Nero wears armor and cloak of Roman
Commander, helmet at his feet
Relief from Sebasteion, Aphrodisias
Mid-first c. CE



LAWMAKERS AND MALE CONTROL OVER FEMALE REPRODUCTIVITY

The Augustan Moral Legislation

THE AUGUSTAN MORAL LEGISLATION

THE LAWS

- *Lex Iulia de Maritandis Ordinibus* (18 BCE): Citizens required to marry; limits marriage across social class boundaries
- *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis* (17 BCE): adultery punished with exile; fathers allowed to kill daughters and partners caught *in flagrante delicto*; husbands required to divorce adulterous wives
- *Lex Papia Poppaea* (9 CE): revisions to law on marriage between the orders; included promotion of legal offspring through *ius trium liberorum*

THEIR FAILURES AND SUCCESSES

- Augustus' daughter Julia
- Augustus' granddaughter Julia
- *Contra*
- Agrippina the Elder and Germanicus

AGRIPPINA'S FECUNDITY

TACITUS AND AGRIPPINA



- Gemma Claudia, onyx cameo c. 49 CE, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
- Claudius and Agrippina the Younger on the left; Germanicus and Agrippina on the right

AGRIPPINA'S *FECUNDITAS* I: PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

- Germanicus convinces her to leave, “embracing her pregnant belly and their shared son, lamenting much,” (*uterum eius et communem filium multo cum fletu complexus*, Tac. *Annals* 1.40.3).
- Agrippina sets out with Caligula in her lap and the other officers’ wives, and the appearance of their little group is pathetic: “A female and pitiable column set out, the wife of the general a refugee, carrying her little son in her lap, the wives of friends wailing around her, who were also being dragged away; no less sad those who remained. The sight was not like that of a prosperous Caesar nor of one in his own camp, but as if in a captured city; the groans and wails attracted even the ears and eyes of the soldiers,” (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.40.4-41.1)
- The soldiers lament her departure and even try to stop her:
- “Thence shame and pity and mindful of her father Agrippina, grandfather Augustus, father-in-law Drusus, her own renown for her fecundity, her noble sexual chastity. And there was the young child born in the camp, brought up among legions’ tents, whom they used to call Caligula in the vocabulary of soldiers, because he often wore the shoe of that name in order to win the goodwill of the people,”
- (*pudor inde et miseratio et patris Agrippae, Augusti avi memoria, socer Drusus, ipsa insigni fecunditate, praeclara pudicitia; iam infans in castris genitus, in contubernio legionum eductus, quem militari vocabulo Caligulam appellabant, quia plerumque ad concilianda vulgi studia eo tegmine pedum induebatur*. Tac. *Ann.* 1.41.3)

AGRIPPINA'S *FECUNDITAS* 2: HIERARCHIES

- *et coniunx Germanici Agrippina fecunditate ac fama Liviam uxorem Drusi praecellebat. sed fratres egregie concordēs et proximorum certaminibus inconcussi.*
- Also the wife of Germanicus, Agrippina, surpassed Livilla, wife of Drusus, in renown and fecundity. But the brothers were singularly harmonious and unaffected by the rivalries of their family members. (Tac. *Ann.* 2.43.6)

AGRIPPINA'S *FECUNDITAS* 3: DEPENDENCY

- *At Agrippina, quamquam defessa luctu et corpore aegro, omnium tamen quae ultionem morarentur intolerans ascendit classem cum cineribus Germanici et liberis, miserantibus cunctis quod femina nobilitate princeps, pulcherrimo modo matrimonio inter venerantis gratantisque aspici solita, tunc feralis reliquias sinu ferret, incerta ultionis, anxia sui et infelici fecunditate fortunae totiens obnoxia.*
- Agrippina in the meantime, although exhausted by grief and physically sick, yet still impatient of everything that might delay vengeance, embarked with the ashes of Germanicus and her children, pitied by all, because a woman of highest nobility, and but lately due to her splendid union usually seen among an admiring and sympathizing crowd, now bearing in her lap the mournful remains of death, uncertain of revenge, anxious for herself and wholly relying upon fortune due to her unlucky fecundity. (Tac. *Ann.* 2.75.1).

AGRIPPINA'S *FECUNDITAS* 4: ARROGANT FECUNDITY

- *neque spargi venenum in tres poterat, egregia custodum fide et pudicitia Agrippinae impenetrabili. igitur contumaciam eius insectari, vetus Augustae odium, recentem Liviae conscientiam exagitare, ut superbam fecunditate, subnixam popularibus studiis inhiare dominationi apud Caesarem arguerent.*
- Nor could he distribute poison amongst the three (sons), due to the exceptional loyalty of their guardians and the unassailable chastity of Agrippina. Thus he inveighed against her arrogance, and worked up the long-standing hatred of Augusta (Livia), the recent guilty conscience of Livilla, urging them to represent to Tiberius that she, haughty because of her fecundity, relying on popular enthusiasm, was eager for rule. (Tac. *Ann.* 4.12.3)

FECUNDITY FAILURES

Agrippina the Younger and Poppaea Sabina

AGRIPPINA THE YOUNGER

- *at Pallas id maxime in Agrippina laudare quod Germanici nepotem secum traheret, dignum prorsus imperatoria fortuna: stirpem nobilem et familiae Iuliae Claudiaequae posteris coniungeret, ne femina expertae fecunditatis, integra iuventa, claritudinem Caesarum aliam in domum ferret.*
- Pallas praised Agrippina especially because she would bring with her the grandson of Germanicus, thoroughly worthy of imperial fortune: noble offspring and the link uniting the descendants of the Julian and Claudian families, nor would a woman of proven fecundity, in the flower of youth, carry the renown of the Caesars into another household. (Tac. Ann. 12.2)
- *...deligi oportere feminam nobilitate puerperii sanctimonia insignem. nec diu anquirendum quin Agrippina claritudine generis anteiret: datum ab ea fecunditatis experimentum et congruere artes honestas.*
- [Vitellius began to advise] that they ought to choose a woman marked for her nobility, childbearing, and purity. He said that it must not be questioned too long that Agrippina stood first in the nobility of her birth: she gave proof of her fecundity and possessed moral qualities.

POPPAEA SABINA

- *cur enim differri nuptias suas? formam scilicet displicere et triumphales avos, an fecunditatem et verum animum? timeri ne uxor saltem iniurias patrum, iram populi adversus superbiam avaritiamque matris aperiat.*
- Why was he deferring their marriage? Was it perhaps because of her beauty and ancestors with their triumphs, or her fecundity and sincere heart? No, the fear was that as a wife she would divulge the wrongs of the Senate, the wrath of the populace at the arrogance and avarice of his mother. (Tac. Ann. 14.1)
- *et additae supplicationes templumque fecunditatis et certamen ad exemplar Actiacae religionis decretum...*
- To these were added thanksgivings and a temple of Fecundity and games on the model of the Actium ceremonies were decreed... (Tac. Ann. 15.23)

DEATH WISHES

- The Death of Agrippina:
 - *iam [in] morte[m] centurioni ferrum destringenti protendens uterum "ventrem feri" exclamavit multisque vulneribus confecta est.*
 - Then as the centurion offered forth his sword for the fatal deed, she, presenting her belly, exclaimed, "Strike the womb," and was dispatched with many wounds. (Tac. Ann. 14.8)
- The Death of Poppaea Sabina:
 - *Post finem ludicri Poppaea mortem obiit, fortuita mariti iracundia, a quo gravida ictu calcis adflicta est neque enim venenum crediderim, quamvis quidam scriptores tradant, odio magis quam ex fide: quippe liberorum copiens et amori uxoris obnoxius erat.*
 - After the conclusion of the games Poppaea met her death from a chance outburst of anger in her husband, by whom she felt the strike of a heel while pregnant. For I cannot believe there was poison, although some writers relate that out of hatred more than belief, for he was desirous of children and wholly in love with his wife. (Tac. Ann. 16.6.1)

MOVING FORWARD (OR BACK?)

