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LEVEL 4.3

Tacitus on Nero's Rome, 64CE:
Orgies, the Great Fire, the Christian
persecution

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TACITUS ON NERO'S ROME, 64CE: ORGIES, THE GREAT FIRE, THE CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

Dear all,

This year I have selected one of the most compelling sections of Tacitus' *Annales*: I keep coming back to this text at the LSS! This is the sequence in book 15 (sections 33-44) covering Nero's Rome in the year 64CE. In this year:

- Nero performs on stage for the first time (in Naples)
- A public orgy takes place at Rome, at which Nero marries one of his own freedmen
- the 'Great Fire' destroys much of the city and gives rise to the notion of Nero fiddling or singing while Rome burns (since exploited by every political cartoonist about every political figure!)
- Tacitus tells us that Christians were publicly persecuted as scapegoats for the fire

The lurid nature of this material sits in contrast to Tacitus' decorum and the dignity of Roman historiography. In much the same way, the spectacular provocations of Nero made a mockery of the awesome responsibility and the dignity of the emperor's role. I hope you find this material and the style in which Tacitus tells the tale as fascinating as I do!

I have included a text and two commentaries (by Norma Miller and Rhiannon Ash): you don't have to use them both, but I thought better to give too much help than not enough. I especially admire Ash's very generous commentary. If you have time as well you may want to read a really interesting article by Brent Shaw (details below), who argues that Tacitus is mistaken about the Christians: that 64 is too early for a recognisable group called "Christians" to be visible to non-Christians at Rome, and that Tacitus is influenced by the greater prominence of Christians at the time at which he wrote the *Annals* (c. 110-117CE). If you have any trouble accessing the article, please do send me an email and I can send you a copy.

We'll aim to read and discuss about three quarters of a page of Latin each day of the school. I'm looking forward as always to seeing you again and to discussing Tacitus and Nero!

Commentaries (both included):

- Ash, R. *Tacitus Annals XV* (Cambridge 2018)
- Miller, N. P., *Tacitus, Annals XV* (London 1973)

Further Reading:

- Bartsch, S., K. Freudenburg and C. Littlewood (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Nero* (Cambridge 2017).
- Pagan, V. E. (ed.) *A Companion to Tacitus* (Malden 2012)
- Shaw, B. 'The myth of the Neronian persecution' *Journal of Roman Studies* 105 (2015) 73–100
- Woodman, A. J. (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus* (Cambridge 2010)

All best wishes,

Paul

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CORNELII TACITI
AB EXCESSV DIVI AVGVSTI
ANNALES
LIBER XV

[33] C. Laecanio M. Licinio consulibus acriore in dies cupidine adigebatur Nero promiscas scaenas frequentandi. nam adhuc per domum aut hortos cecinerat Iuuenalibus ludis, quos ut parum celebres et tantae uoci angustos spernebat. non tamen Romae incipere ausus Neapolim quasi Graecam urbem delegit; inde initium fore, ut transgressus in Achaiam insignesque et antiquitus sacras coronas adeptus maiore fama studia ciuium eliceret. ergo contractum oppidanorum uulgus, et quos e proximis coloniis et municipiis eius rei fama ciuerat, quique Caesarem per honorem aut uarios usus sectantur, etiam militum manipuli, theatrum Neapolitanorum complent. [34] Illic, plerique ut arbitrabantur, triste, ut ipse, prouidum potius et secundis numinibus euenit: nam egresso qui adfuerat populo uacuum et sine ullius noxa theatrum collapsum est. ergo per compositos cantus grates dis atque ipsam recentis casus fortunam celebrans petiturusque maris Hadriae traiectus apud Beneuentum interim consedit, ubi gladiatorium munus a Vatinio celebre edebatur. Vatinus inter foedissima eius aulae ostenta fuit, sutrinae tabernae alumnus, corpore detorto, facetiis scurrilibus; primo in contumelias adsumptus, dehinc optimi cuiusque criminatione eo usque ualuit, ut gratia pecunia ui nocendi etiam malos praemineret.

[35] Eius minus frequentanti Neroni ne inter uoluptates quidem a sceleribus cessabatur. isdem quippe illis diebus Torquatus Silanus mori adigitur, quia super Iuniae familiae claritudinem diuum Augustum abauum ferebat. iussi accusatores obicere prodigum largitionibus, neque aliam spem quam in rebus nouis esse; quin <inter libertos> habere, quos ab epistulis et libellis et rationibus appellet, nomina summae curae et meditamenta. tum intimus quisque libertorum uincti abreptique; et cum damnatio instaret, brachiorum uenas Torquatus interscidit. secutaque Neronis oratio ex more, quamuis sontem et defensionis merito diffisum uicturum tamen fuisse, si clementiam iudicis exspectasset.

[36] Nec multo post omissa in praesens Achaia (causae in incerto fuere) urbem reuisit, prouincias Orientis, maxime Aegyptum, secretis imaginationibus agitans. dehinc edicto testificatus non longam sui absentiam et cuncta in re publica perinde immota ac prospera fore, super ea profectioe adiit Capitolium. illic ueneratus deos, cum Vestae quoque templum inisset, repente cunctos per artus tremens, seu numine exterrente, seu facinorum recordatione numquam timore uacuus, deseruit inceptum, cunctas sibi curas amore patriae leuiores dictitans: uidisse maestos ciuium uultus, audire secretas querimonias, quod tantum <itineris> aditurus esset, cuius ne modicos quidem egressus tolerarent, sueti aduersum fortuita aspectu principis refoueri. ergo ut in priuatis necessitudinibus proxima pignora praeualerent, ita populum Romanum uim plurimam habere parendumque retinenti. haec atque talia plebi uolentia fuere,

uoluptatum cupidine et, quae praecipua cura est, rei frumentariae angustias, si abesset, metuenti. senatus et primores in incerto erant, procul an coram atrocior haberetur. dehinc, quae natura magnis timoribus, deterius credebant quod euenerat.

[37] Ipse quo fidem acquireret nihil usquam perinde laetum sibi, publicis locis struere conuiuia totaque urbe quasi domo uti. et celeberrimae luxu famaue epulae fuere, quas a Tigellino paratas ut exemplum referam, ne saepius eadem prodigientia narranda sit. igitur in stagno Agrippae fabricatus est ratem, cui superpositum conuiuium nauium aliarum tractu moueretur. naues auro et ebore distinctae; remigesque exoleti per aetates et scientiam libidinum componebantur. uolucres et feras diuersis et terris at animalia maris Oceano abusque petiuerat. crepidinibus stagni lupanaria adstabant inlustribus feminis completa, et contra scorta uisebantur nudis corporibus. iam gestus motusque obsceni; et postquam tenebrae incedebant, quantum iuxta nemoris et circiumiecta tecta consonare cantu et luminibus clarescere. ipse per licita atque illicita foedatus nihil flagitii reliquerat, quo corruptior ageret, nisi paucos post dies uni ex illo contaminatorum grege (nomen Pythagorae fuit) in modum solemnium coniugiorum denupsisset. inditum imperatori flammeum, <ad>missi auspices, dos et genialis torus et faces nuptiales, cuncta denique spectata quae etiam in femina nox operit.

[38] Sequitur clades, forte an dolo principis incertum (nam utrumque auctores prodidere), sed omnibus, quae huic urbi per uiolentiam ignium acciderunt, grauior atque atrocior. initium in ea parte circi ortum, quae Palatino Caelioque montibus contigua est, ubi per tabernas, quibus id mercimonium inerat, quo flamma alitur, simul coeptus ignis et statim ualidus ac uento citus longitudinem circi corripuit. neque enim domus munimentis saeptae uel templa muris cincta aut quid aliud morae interiacebat. impetus peruagatum incendium plana primum, deinde in edita adsurgens et rursus inferiora populando anteit remedia uelocitate mali et obnoxia urbe artis itineribus hucque et illuc flexis atque enoribus uicis, qualis uetus Roman fuit. ad hoc lamenta pauentium feminarum, fessa aetate aut rudis pueritiae [aetas], quique sibi quique aliis consulebat, dum trahunt inualidos aut opperiuntur, pars mora, pars festinans, cuncta impediabant. et saepe, dum in tergum respectant, lateribus aut fronte circumueniebantur, uel si in proxima euaserant, illis quoque igni correptis, etiam quae longinqua crediderant in eodem casu reperiabant. postremo, quid uitarent quid peterent ambigui, complere uias, sterni per agros; quidam amissis omnibus fortunis, diurni quoque uictus, alii caritate suorum, quos eripere nequiuerant, quamuis patente effugio interiere. nec quisquam defendere audebat, crebris multorum minis restinguere prohibentium, et quia alii palam facies iaciebant atque esse sibi auctorem uociferabantur, siue ut raptus licentius exercebant seu iussu.

[39] Eo in tempore Nero Anti agens non ante in urbem regressus est, quam domui eius, qua Palantium et Maecenatis hortos continuauerat, ignis propinquaret. neque tamen sisti potuit, quin et Palatium et domus et cuncta circum haurirentur. sed solacium populo exturbato ac profugo campum Martis ac

monumenta Agrippae, hortos quin etiam suos patefacit et subitaria aedificia exstruxit, quae multitudinem inopem acciperent; subuectaque utensilia ab Ostia et propinquis municipiis, pretiumque frumenti minutum usque ad ternos nummos. quae quamquam popularia in irritum cadebant, quia peruaserat rumor ipso tempore flagrantis urbis inisse eum domesticam scaenam et cecinisse Troianum excidium, praesentia mala uetustis cladibus adsimulantem.

[40] Sexto demum die apud imas Esquilias finis incendio factus, prorutis per immensum aedificiis, ut continuae uiolentiae campus et uelut uacuum caelum occurreret. necdum pos<i>t<us> metus aut redierat <p>lebi s<pes>: rursum grassatus ignis, patulis magis urbis locis; eoque strages hominum minor: delubra deum et porticus amoenitati dicatae latius procidere. plusque infamiae id incendium habuit, quia praediis Tigellini Aemilianis proruperat uidebaturque Nero condendae urbis nouae et cognomento suo appellandae gloriam quaerere. quippe in regiones quattuordecim Romam diuiditur, quarum quattuor integrae manebant, tres solo tenus deiectae, septem reliquis pauca tectorum uestigia supererant, lacera et semusta.

[41] Domuum et insularum et templorum, quae amissa sunt, numerum inire haud promptum fuerit; sed uetustissima religione, quod Seruius Tullius Lu<ci>nae, et magna ara fanumque, quae praesenti Herculi Arcas Euander sacrauerat, aedesque Statoris Iouis uota Romulo Numaeque regia et delubrum Vestae cum penatibus populi Romani exusta; iam opes tot uictoriis quaesitae et Graecarum artium decora, exim monumenta ingeniorum antiqua et incorrupta, <ut> quamuis in tanta resurgentis urbis pulchritudine multa seniores meminerint, quae reparari nequibant. fuere qui adnotarent quartum decimum Kalendas Sextiles principium incendii huius ortum, quo et Senones captam urbem inflammauerint. alii eo usque cura<e> progressi sunt, ut totidem annos, mensesque et dies inter utraque incendia numerent.

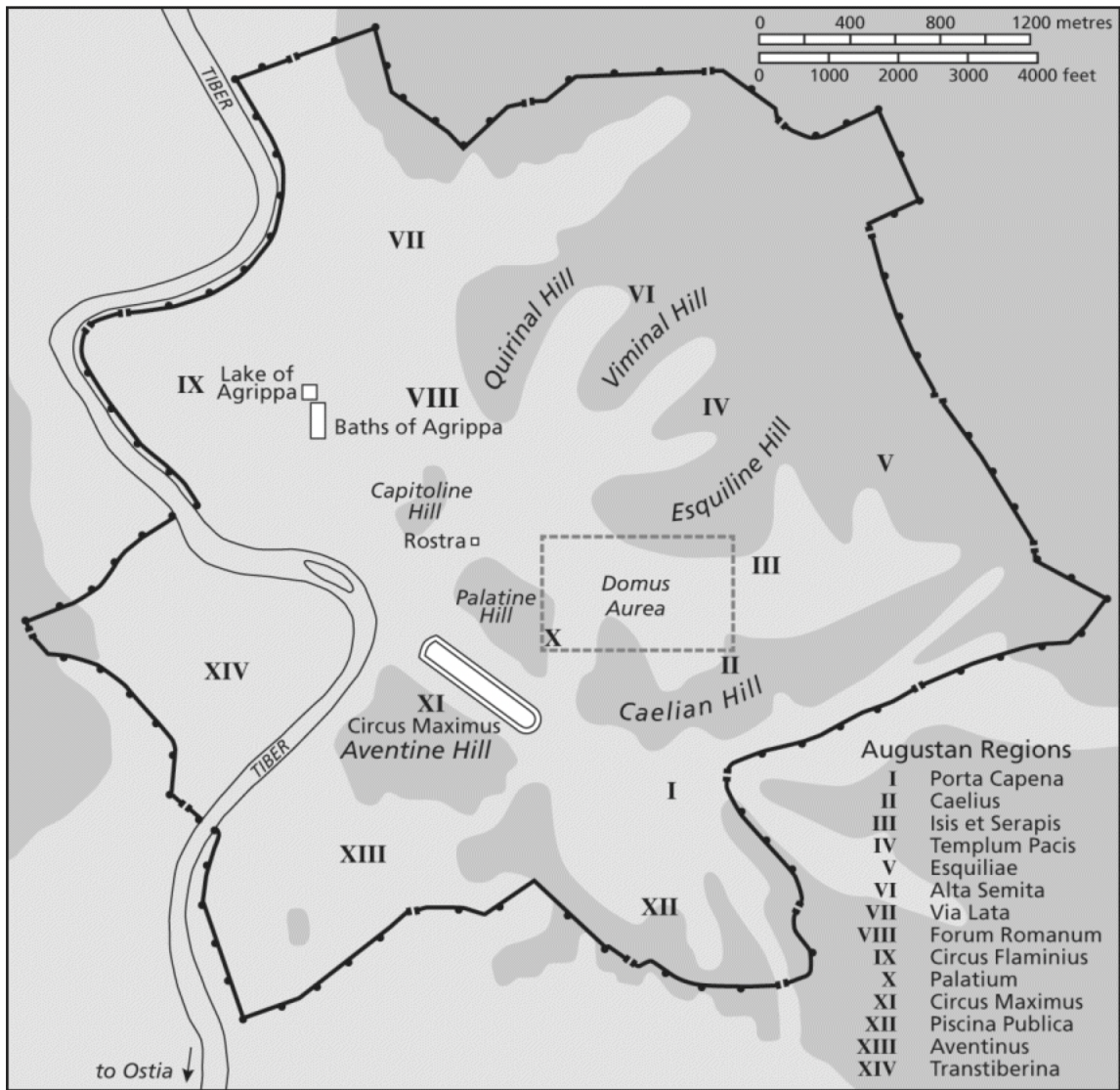
[42] Ceterum Nero usus est patriae ruinis exstruxitque domum, in qua haud proinde gemmae et aurum miraculo essent, solita pridem et luxu uulgata, quam arua et stagna et in modum solitudinem hinc siluae, inde aperta spatia et prospetus, magistris et machinatoribus Seuero et Celere, quibus ingenium et audacia erat etiam, quae natura denegauisset, per artem temptare et uiribus principis illudere. namque ab lacu Auerno nauigabilem fossam usque ad ostia Tibernia depressuros promiserant squalenti litore aut per montes aduersos. neque enim aliud umidum gignendis aquis occirrit quam Pomptinae paludes: cetera abrupta aut arentia, ac si perrumpi possent, intolerandus labor nec satis causae. Nero tamen, ut erat incredibilium cupitor, effodere proxima Auerno iuga conisus est: manentque uestigia irritae spei.

[43] Ceterum urbis quae domui supererant non, ut post Gallica incendia, nulla distinctione nec passim erecta, sed dimensis uicorum ordinibus et latis uiarum spatiis cohibitaque aedificiorum altitudine ac patefactis areis additisque porticibus, quae frontem insularum protegerent. eas proticus Nero sua pecunia exstructurum purgatasque areas dominis traditurum pollicitus est. addidit praemia

pro cuiusque ordine et rei familiaris copiis, finiuitque tempus, intra quod effectis domibus aut insulis apiscerentur. ruderi accipiendo Ostienses paludes destinabat, utique naues, quae frumentum Tiberi subuectassent, onustae rudere decurrerent: aedificiaque ipsa certa sui parte sine trabibus saxo Gabino Albanoue solidarentur, quod is lapis ignibus imperuius est; iam aqua priuatorum licentia intercepta quo largior et pluribus locis in publicum flueret, custodes <essent>; et subsidia reprimendis ignibus in propatulo quisque haberet; nec communione parietum, sed propriis quaeque muris ambirentur. ea ex utilitate accepta decorem quoque nouae urbi attulere. erant tamen qui crederent ueterem illam formam salubritati magis conduxisse, quoniam angustiae itinerum et altitudo tectorum non perinde solis uapore perumperentur: at nunc patulam latitudinem et nulla umbra defensam grauiore aestu ardescere.

[44] Et haec quidem humanis consiliis prouidebantur. mox petita dis piacula aditque Sibyllae libri, ex quibus supplicatum Volcano et Cereri Proserpinaeque, ac propitiata Iuno per matronas, primum in Capitolio, deinde apud proximum mare, unde hausta aqua templum et simulacrum deae perspersum est; et sellisternia ac peruigilia celebrare feminae, quibus mariti erant.

Sed non ope humana, non largitionibus principis aut deum placamentis decedebat infamia, quin iussum incendium crederetur. ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia inuisos uulgi Christianos appellabat. (auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat; repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Iudaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque.) igitur primum correpti quidam fatebantur, deinde indicio eorum multitudo ingens haud proinde in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis conuicti sunt. et pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis contacti laniatu canum interirent aut crucibus adfixi ac flammandi, ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. hortos suos ei spectaculo Nero obtulerat, et circense ludicrum edebat, habitu aurigae permixtus plebi uel curriculo insistens. unde quamquam aduersus sontes et nouissima exempla meritos miseratio oriebatur, tamquam non utilitate publica sed in saeuitiam unius absumerentur.



Map 3. Rome

From Ash. R. *Tacitus Annals XV* (Cambridge 2018) p. xiv

in high regard, and Nero was probably trying to encourage a Greek custom, rather than deliberately debauching and insulting Romans. But the Romans remained unconvinced.

Chapters 33-7 Activities of Nero: appearance on the stage, removal of a rival, projected tour of the Orient, and an orgy.

Chapter 33

1. **C. Laecanio M. Licinio consulibus**: the year is A.D. 64. Laecanius lived until the time of Vespasian (Pliny *N.H.* 26,5), Licinius was apparently accused and condemned before the end of Nero's reign (*H.* 4.42).

acriore . . . cupidine: Tacitus here begins a careful presentation of the profligate Nero, successively in the context of theatrical performance (33), worthless companions (34,2), the murder of a rival (35), a notorious banquet (37), the great Fire (38f.) and the carnage following a conspiracy (48f.). The cumulative effect is considerable. The factual content is confirmed from other sources, but the presentation is Tacitus' own.

The sentence is economical and effective. The sharpening of desire is expressed by the position of *acriore* and the addition of *in dies*: the compulsive quality of *cupidine* is underlined by *adigebatur*: Nero is placed between the compulsive verb and the emphatic adjective *promiscas*: and the final verb suggests that his desire was for *constant* publicity.

Iuuenalibus ludis: the ceremony of the first shaving of a young Roman's beard was a family festival (Dio 48,34,2): Nero enlarged his 'family', and celebrated the occasion by founding these games (*A.* 14,15), which were repeated on several anniversaries. They were clearly not entirely public, and Nero now desired a larger audience.

parum . . . angustos: Nero's motive is clearly defined, and his standard of performance ironically implied. Both are supported by other sources (e.g. Suet. *Nero* 20 and Dio 61,20,2): but they could possibly be wrong. Nero's thirst for constant applause seems indubitable, but a musical gift can be exercised only in performance, and Roman disapproval of such performance might affect the verdict on its standard.

2. **Neapolim quasi Graecae urbem**: Naples was a Greek city (founded from Chalcis *via* Cumae about 600 B.C., see Livy 8,22,5): *quasi* therefore = 'as being', see 15,1 n.

Although it had long been part of Roman Italy, Naples always retained much of its Greek cultural inheritance, and its theatrical performances and games were on Greek not Roman lines. It therefore provided a more sympathetic setting for Nero's début.

fore: the motive is vividly presented in the form of Nero's thoughts.

Achaïam: mainland Greece.

coronas: the wreaths traditionally awarded as prizes in Greek contests, athletic and cultural. Nero could, clearly, be sure of winning if he competed.

ciium: the citizens of Rome, as contrasted with the *oppidani* §3, who are Neapolitans.

3. **coloniis et municipiis**: the towns of Italy. The distinction between the original *coloniae* (settlements of Roman citizens) and *municipia* (self-governing Italian towns in alliance with Rome) had by now largely disappeared, because *coloniae* had a large measure of independence, and *municipia* had Roman citizenship. See *CQ* 1914, 132 & 1915, 57.

militum: probably mainly Praetorians (see 49,2 n.).

Chapter 34

1. **triste . . . prouidum**: the neuter adjective is used for the noun.

conlapsum est: Suetonius (*Nero* 20) says that there was an earthquake, which shook the theatre when Nero was performing. Both may be right, simply viewing a series of incidents from different standpoints.

compositos: i.e., they were not extempore.

celebrans: it belongs, strictly, to *fortunam*, but by a zeugma (4,2 n.) is used with *grates* also.

petiturus: 'on his way to . . .' The collocation of present and future participles is striking.

Hadriae traiectus: he was on his way to Brundisium, to take ship for Greece. Beneventum was on the Appian Way, where Nero would join it from Naples.

The striking participles, the poetic use of the noun *Hadria* (cf. Hor. *Od.* 1,3,15) in apposition, instead of an adjective, the use of *traiectus* (found only here in Tacitus), combine to work towards the mention of Vatinius, and the sketch of him which then follows. For *apud* see 51,2 n.

2. **Vatinius**: he was a native of Beneventum (Juv. 5,46) and a new type of court character – the licensed buffoon. But such men, in Roman as in medieval times, could be powerful and dangerous. Tacitus recognises his importance, and his colour-value in the narrative.

ostenta: 'things shown' i.e. portents, prodigies. Variation of construction, and vivid vocabulary (*sutrinus* and *scurrilis* appear only here in Tacitus) tellingly arranged, combine to make an impressive portrait of a man and a type. Vatinius is (in savage circumlocution) a nursling of a cobbler's shop, a cripple and a bitter wit.

facietis scurrilibus: Dio 63,15,1 quotes one of these, and vouches for its accuracy. 'I hate you, Nero, because you are of senatorial rank.' This pleased Nero, because he hated the Senate.

criminatione: he became an informer. Successful cases brought by informers were rewarded, often with the victim's confiscated goods. Thus Vatinius won for himself influence (with Nero, and with those trying to appease the informer), wealth, and the power to hurt others (which perhaps gratified him in his deformity). His attributes are emphasised by being placed in asyndeton (i.e., juxtaposed, without connection), and by their association with the final cutting phrase (even in that collection of crooks, Vatinius was remarkable) and the Sallustian verb (*praemineret*) which it contains.

Chapter 35

1. **Torquatus Silanus:** D. Junius Silanus Torquatus, consul in A.D. 53 (*A.* 12,58), stood in the same relationship to Augustus as did Nero (see Genealogical Table, p. xviii). He is therefore a potential rival, and is removed.

Iunia familiae: it included such families as the Bruti.

ferabat: 'carried' i.e. 'boasted'. Cf. *A.* 2,43 *auunculum Augustum ferens*.

2. **prodigum largitionibus:** the two words accuse him of being (a) poor, and so dangerous, as seeing in revolution his only hope of recouping his fortunes, (b) responsible for his poverty, because of extravagance, and (c) over-generous, with overtones of bribery. Great wealth could be dangerous, and Dio (62,27,2) suggests that Torquatus may have squandered his deliberately.

ab epistulis f.: these titles (Private Secretary, Appeals Secretary and Accountant) had become so associated with the Emperor's Household (cf. Suet. *Claud.* 28) that a private citizen using them could be accused of claiming for himself the machinery of Empire. The abl. in the phrase expresses direction, point of view and therefore function. Cf. Cic. *Att.* 8,5,1 *seruum a pedibus meis*.

nomina . . . meditamenta: 'titles involving the highest concern, and preparations (for it)', i.e. 'titles suggesting preparation for Imperial duties'. *meditamentum* appears to be a Tacitean invention, and he uses it only twice in the extant works (cf. *H.* 4,26).

3. **interscidit:** the word is rare, and is found only here in Tacitus (*abscondo* is so used at 69,2 and *A.* 16,11). It is used to emphasise Torquatus as a victim.

Suicide was employed (*A.* 6,29) to anticipate condemnation, and to ensure an easier death, proper burial and the validity of the accused's will.

ex more: cf. *A.* 2,31, where Tiberius makes a similar statement. *oratio* implies a formal, public statement, presumably in the Senate.

iudicis: Nero himself: the trial would have taken place *intra cubiculum* (*A.* 11,2). Tacitus' whole presentation of the statement is sardonic: probably not without cause.

Chapter 36

1. **in praesens:** he went to Greece in A.D. 66 (Dio 63,8,2).

in incerto: he may conceivably have had some warning of conspiracy. **sui:** see 4,1 n. It here adds emphasis.

Capitolium: the temple of Jupiter, with whom were associated Juno and Minerva, was the focus of Rome's official religion.

2. **Vestae:** the temple of Vesta, in the Forum below the Capitol, was the 'hearth' of the Roman family.

seu . . . seu: the presentation is typical of Tacitus - alternative explanations, constructions carefully out of balance, and the stylistic emphasis on the second half.

dictitans: probably (10,2 n.) the emphatic use of the frequentative verb: 'asserting', probably by means of another edict: the language sounds official.

3. Nero's statement is reported in indirect speech, which makes it sound official, and also adds a sardonic tone - Tacitus is so obviously reporting 'without comment'.

uidisse . . . audire: the change of tense is significant: their protests (though private) were ringing in his ears.

tantum itineris aditurus: the phrase echoes Tiridates' words in 30,2. Another prince is contemplating a journey, and there is implicit comparison and comment.

ergo ut f.: the alliterative *p*'s mark the balance (*priuatis . . . populum*), emphasise the point of comparison (*praeuulerent . . . plurimam*), and point the decision (*parendum*).

4. **haec atque talia:** a standard phrase, but it sounds contemptuous in this context.

uolentia: not 'willing' but 'welcome'. This middle/passive use of the present participle is found occasionally from Sallust on (cf. *Hist.* 4,31 D *uolentia plebi*). It is probably a Graccism.

cupidine . . . metuenti: the change of construction, the longer phrase and the final position emphasise *metuenti*: bread was more important than circuses. See 18,2 n.

si abisset: the subjunctive is virtually indirect, expressing their fear. The apodosis of the condition is contained in *angustias*. Cf. 51,2 *destinationem*: 52,1.

in incerto f.: the phrase echoes one of Sallust's (*Jug.* 46,8 *ut, absens an praesens . . . perniciosior esset, in incerto haberetur*). This, with the preceding

plebi uolentia, and the emphasis on *uoluptates* and power politics, gives a Sallustian flavour to the passage.

deterius f.: an acid, but shrewd comment, given emphasis by its position.

Chapter 37

1. This chapter marks the climax of Nero's Rake's Progress, and it is presented with poetical vocabulary and constructions, rare and emotive words, and careful structure.

quo: see 10,3n. 'To acquire the reputation that nothing anywhere (was) as pleasant for him (as Rome)'. The suggested motive and the implication that it is a discreditable one are initial and emphatic.

struere . . . uti: the historic infinitives mark a swift and vivid narrative. *struere* is used of 'providing' a banquet again in 55,3; it is perhaps significant that it is also used of 'contriving' a plot or crime, cf. *A.* 1,13.

Tigellino: Ofonius Tigellinus, Nero's Praetorian Prefect, is presented as his evil genius (cf. *A.* 14,51 & 57). He was a freedman, wealthy, powerful and unscrupulous – the kind of man Tacitus especially dislikes: but there seems good reason for his dislike of Tigellinus. He outlived Nero, and was forced to suicide by Otho in 69. Tacitus describes his end and his character in *H.* 1,72.

ut exemplum referam: a reasonable proceeding. Tacitus picks his example with care, and presents it with artistry, to demonstrate the moral degeneracy of Nero and his friends. But the banquet is attested from other sources too – Dio 62,15 is even more lavish in detail.

prodigentia: this vigorous and allusive word ('monstrous behaviour') is used by Tacitus on two other occasions only (*A.* 6,14 & *A.* 13,1) and is found nowhere else in extant Latin literature.

2. **igitur:** this returns, as often, to the main theme which has been interrupted by a parenthesis. Cf. 44,4; 69,1; 72,2.

in stagno Agrippae: references in Ovid (*Pont.* 1,8,38) and Frontinus (*Aqued.* 2,84) make it fairly clear that this was a reservoir storing water for Agrippa's Baths, and that it stood near them (and near the Pantheon) in the Campus Martius.

superpositum: the word occurs in Tacitus only here.

tractu: Tacitus uses this word only four times, three of them in this book (cf. 10,1 & 64,3; the other example is in the description of the storm in *A.* 2,23). It is noteworthy that all four contexts are highly wrought and emotive. The word has poetic (cf. Virg. *Georg.* 3,183) and Sallustian (*Jug.* 78,3) associations.

diuersis e terris: the anastrophe of the preposition (1,3n.) and the

extended meaning of *diuersus* (= 'distant' cf. Virg. *Aen.* 11,261) are poetical and striking.

Oceano abusque: anastrophe again, this time of a rare and poetic preposition (cf. Virg. *Aen.* 7,289): the effect is to make the 'sea-beasts' very rare and exotic indeed.

3. **crepidinibus:** another Tacitean 'solitary'. The word was in current literary use (cf. Cic. *Verr.* 5,97; Virg. *Aen.* 10,653), though not very common: it is more impressive, in sound, length and rarity, than e.g. *ripis*, and it is further emphasised by its position. The case is probably dative, cf. *A.* 14,8 *cui (cubiculo) adstant.*

iam . . . obsceni: supply *sunt/erant*. So presented, the gestures have almost independent existence. This emphasis is increased by the final adjective, which Tacitus uses only here.

postquam . . . incedebant: *postquam* with the imperfect indicative describes an action which continues up to the time of the main verb. Because of this, it often conveys a causal connection too, 'now that'. The construction is especially characteristic of Livy and Tacitus, though not confined to them. Cf. 45,3; 67,2. *incedo* for the advance of night is rare.

consonare . . . clarescere: the clause as a whole displays variation, alliteration, chiasmus and assonance, which combine to convey the colour and sound of the proceedings.

4. **ipse:** the scene, presented so far kaleidoscopically and impressionistically, is now focused sharply on Nero's activities. After a general introduction, one scandalous incident is described in detail, with the technical vocabulary of the formal marriage ceremony adding to the outrage of this perversion of it.

W. Allen Jr. (*Numen* 1962, 99f.) has made the ingenious suggestion that this mock-marriage might be connected with a religious rite – a festival of Flora, or something like a Mithraic ceremony – and so be a 'mystic' marriage. It is not impossible, given Nero's temperament and interests: but it is strange that neither Tacitus nor Suetonius (*Nero* 28–9) makes such a connection: following a strange ritual would have made another charge. What is clear, is Roman outrage at the distortion of ancient ceremony.

per licita atque illicita: 'polar' expression, using the two extremes to cover the whole range of activity which they embrace.

reliquerat . . . nisi . . . denupsisset: see 8,2n.

contaminatorum grege: a reminiscence of Horace (*Od.* 1,37,9), which provides not only a vivid phrase, but a pointed comparison with Cleopatra's associates.

Pythagorae: this could be dative (Latin says either *nomen est mihi Marcus* or *nomen est mihi Marco*). But Tacitus seems to use the dat.

construction only when the name is an adjective (cf. *A.* 1,31 *exercitus . . . cui nomen superiori*). It may therefore be genitive (of definition), which he does use elsewhere, cf. *H.* 4,18 *castra, quibus Veterum nomen est*.

imperator: in pointed prominence, and in juxtaposition to the Roman objects which he was mis-using. The *flammeum* was the bridal veil, *auspices* were necessary for the ceremony (Cic. *Diu.* 1,28), the dowry was officially transferred, the marriage bed was prominently displayed, and the procession was accompanied by torch-bearers. Cf. *Cat.* 61.

missi: the *auspices* delivered their reading of the omens to the bride (*A.* 11,27; *Juv.* 10,336), and *denupsisset* shows that this was Nero's rôle in the ceremony.

genialis: the Genius of the family is naturally associated with efforts to promote its survival.

Chapters 38–41 *The great Fire at Rome: its origin, course and consequences.*

Chapter 38

1. **sequitur clades:** the fire began (41,2) on 19 July A.D. 64.

forte an dolo: the structure points the insinuation. But it is interesting that no other extant source admits of any doubt at all – Dio (62,16), Suetonius (*Nero* 38) and Pliny (*N.H.* 17,5; see *Hermes* 1960, 111 f.) all attribute the fire to Nero. There obviously was a divided tradition, but without Tacitus we should never have known it.

auctores: on Tacitus' sources, see *Introd.* 1.

omnibus: from the sack of Rome by the Gauls in 390 B.C. (Livy 5,41–2), the city had been subject to many fires, deliberate and accidental (cf. *A.* 4,64 & 6,45). The form, site and structure of the old city made it peculiarly vulnerable to fire.

2. **initium . . . ortum:** the apparent tautology is for emphasis. Cf. *A.* 1,31.

in ea parte circi: at the SE corner of the Circus Maximus. See p. 20.

mercimonium: Tacitus uses the word only here, and it is an archaism, and rare.

coeptus . . . citus . . . circi corripuit: the alliteration points the progress of the fire.

domus . . . templa: self-contained houses, and temples, would have had walled grounds which might have stopped the flames: instead, there were only *insulae* (41,1), blocks of flats crowding narrow streets, which caught and spread the fire.

aut quid: see 19,2n. Here *quid*, in a negative phrase, does duty for *quidquam*.

3. **impetu:** the abl. of manner normally requires *cum* or an adjective, except for those forms stereotyped as adverbs (e.g. *iure, iniuria*). Tacitus extends the usage.

populando: for the abl., see 8,2n.

enormibus: 'irregular'. There were no tidy boundaries within which the fire could be contained. Livy (5,55,4), describing the rebuilding of Rome after the fire of 390 B.C., says *festinatio curam exemit uicos dirigendi*.

uetus Roma: the Rome which Tacitus knew was largely of Nero's rebuilding.

4. **fessa aetate:** the general sense is clear – that weeping women, the old and infirm, and helpless children contributed to the confusion. But the text (*fessa aetate aut rudis pueritiae aetas* M, where either *aetate* or *aetas* must go: *fessa senum aut rudis pueritiae aetas* L, which is an obvious emendation) and the syntax, present difficulties. The best solution still seems to be to read M's text without *aetas*. Tacitus nowhere else separates *fessa . . . aetas*: the bold use of ablative and genitive of quality alone is not very different from other verbal short cuts (e.g. *inter diuersi generis ordinis* f. 54,1: and cf. Livy 39,8,6 *mixti feminis mares, aetatis tenerae maioribus*): the context shows variety and boldness being deliberately contrived: and the very boldness of expression is probably the cause of the textual corruption.

5. **in proxima:** to a neighbouring district.

6. **quid . . . quid:** the anaphora (repetition of a word at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses, so making a conjunction unnecessary) here emphasises their bewilderment.

diurni . . . uictus: the genitive depends on the general idea of 'provision' contained in *fortunis*.

interiere: a solemn and rhythmical climax.

7. **crebris f.:** the interwoven order emphasises the numbers and the threats, and the change of construction to *quia* marks the more positive action.

siue ut . . . seu iussu: the variation and the order again insinuate Nero's responsibility. But Tacitus does see and record another possible explanation.

The description of the fire moves rapidly and economically from date and disastrous nature §1, *via* location and contributory causes §2, to the force and extent §3, and the people affected by it §§4–6: arson is suggested at the beginning and the end: the chapter shows striking vocabulary, striking constructions, variety and compression – the variability and confusion of the action, e.g., is suggested by the variety and accumulation of constructions in §§3–6. The technique is impressionistic, but such factual details as are provided seem accurate (and others are added

in 39-41). It is a splendid study of the chaos produced by calamity, and of the human suffering involved.

Chapter 39

1. **Nero Antii agens**: Nero's absence from Rome, and his attitude, support the view that he was not responsible for the outbreak of the fire.

qua . . . continuauerat: Augustus had established a residence on the Palatine, and later emperors continued to live there: Maecenas, Augustus' friend, had gardens on the Esquiline (Suet. *Tib.* 15), which he left to Augustus and Augustus to his successors: Nero had a house of his own in the valley between the two (where the Colosseum now stands).

haurientur: 'were devastated'. Cf. *A.* 3,72 *Pompei theatrum igne fortuito haustum*.

2. **solacium**: acc. in apposition to the phrase. See 27,2 n.

campum Martis: the use of the genitive in place of the more usual adjective *Martius*, focuses attention on the phrase. Cf. 44,1 *Sibyllae libri*.

monumenta Agrippae: these buildings stood on the *campus Martius*, and included the Baths (37,2) and the Pantheon.

quin etiam: anastrophe of conjunctions, as of prepositions (1,3 n.) starts naturally in the poets, and then comes into post-Augustan prose. Except in the *Dialogus*, Tacitus never uses this phrase in the initial position. It marks a climax, and its position here gives greater emphasis to *suos*. The gardens were at the foot of the Vatican hill (*A.* 14,14).

utensilia: 'necessaries'.

ab Ostia: the preposition is used to ensure clarity. *Ostia* may be either fem. sing. or neut. pl., and it is essential here that the direction should be clear. The preposition is also required for *municipiis*, and stands more naturally and conveniently at the beginning of the whole phrase.

pretium frumenti: the average price of corn in Nero's time can be deduced from Pliny *N.H.* 18,90 as five sesterces.

3. **rumor**: see 15,2 n. Tacitus is using the story to create atmosphere, without committing himself about its truth. Both Suetonius (*Nero* 38) and Dio (62,18,1) state it as fact, and place the performance on the Tower of Maecenas and the roof of the Palace respectively.

domesticam scaenam: see 33,1 and n.

Troianum excidium: i.e., he sang the *Halosis Ilii*, almost certainly his own composition (Dio 62,18,1; Juv. 8,221). Nero may have been moved by the fire to artistic expression: but it is perhaps more likely that disapproval of such performances by the Emperor combined with his unpopularity after the fire, to produce the story.

Chapter 40

1. **sexto . . . die**: Suetonius (*Nero* 38) gives six days and seven nights as the duration of the fire: Dio (62,17,1) 'several' days and nights. An inscription (*CIL* VI, 1,826) mentions nine days, which suggests that the second outbreak lasted for three days.

prorutis: a 'scorched earth' policy was the only way of stopping the fire.

per immensum: see 2,3 n. Buildings were demolished on a vast scale, so that the ground resembled a flat plain, and the skyline was empty.

necdum . . . spes: the text is an emendation, and far from certain. But the general sense is clear: before people had time to recover from the first outbreak, there was a second.

eoque: the open ground allowed people to escape, but left buildings unprotected.

porticus: the colonnades where people walked and talked. Cf. Hor. *Sat.* 1,4,134.

2. **praediis . . . Aemilianis**. the exact location is uncertain, but it probably lay between the *campus Martius* and the Capitol (see Map. p. 20). Cf. Varro *R.R.* 3,2,6; Suet. *Claud.* 18. The ablative indicates origin.

uidebatur: it is not impossible that Nero or Tigellinus was responsible for the second fire, wishing to clear the ground for proper reconstruction of the damaged city. But it is equally possible that smouldering embers came somewhere to life again, and that human nature's instinctive desire to blame *someone* for disaster, has combined with the Nero legend to allot the blame to him.

quippe . . . diuiditur: this looks (Hartman, *Analecta Tacitea*, 203) very like a gloss on the text. Tacitus' readers knew this: and he has already referred (*A.* 14,12) simply to *quattuordecim urbis regiones*.

quattuor integrae: these would be the districts farthest from the centre of the city and the fire, and would certainly include XIV (*Trans-tiberina*): as the fire stopped *apud imas Esquilias* §1, V (*Esquiliae*) may have been another: the other possibilities are I (*Porta Capena*), VI (*Alta Semita*) and VII (*Via Lata*).

tres . . . deiectae: XI (*Circus Maximus*) certainly, probably with X (*Palatium*) and IV (*Subura*).

pauca . . . uestigia: although the damage to the city was clearly great, this must be exaggeration. The Capitol (44,1) and Forum (*A.* 16, 27) were apparently largely unaffected: Tiberius' house on the Palatine still stood five years later (*H.* 1,27): and even the Circus was in use again in the following year (53,1).

lacera et semusta: the closing adjectives, poetic and pathetic, point the picture.

Chapter 41

1. **fueroit:** the potential subjunctive expresses mild assertion, and the perfect is so used from the time of Cicero. Cf. 49,1 *memorauerim*, and the common *dixerit aliquis*.

uetustissima religione: a loosely attached abl. of attendant circumstances or quality.

Seruius Tullius Lunae: Servius Tullius was traditionally (Livy 1,41,3) the sixth of the kings of Rome. The temple of Luna was on the Aventine (Livy 40,2,2), and Servius is nowhere else mentioned in connection with it: but he did found the temple of Diana, also on the Aventine (Livy 1,45,1), and this may be either an associated shrine, or another way of referring to the same temple (Diana/Artemis was after all the Moon goddess). *Lucinae* L presents even greater difficulties: no such temple is known, and *Graecarum artium decora* suggests that Luna is the right goddess, because Vitruvius (5,5,8) says that Corinthian bronzes were kept in her temple.

magna ara: the Ara Maxima, situated near the NW end of the Circus (and so right in the path of the first flames) was traditionally founded by Evander after Hercules had killed Cacus, the stealer of his cattle. The story is told by Livy (1,7,4f.) and Virgil (*Aen.* 8,185f.) among others. Various versions of the story and of the significance of the worship are found, but Tacitus is here obviously emphasising the legendary nature of the foundation, in order to emphasise the antiquity of the shrine destroyed.

fanumque: probably not a 'shrine' in the sense of a building, but a 'holy place'.

Statoris Iouis: the temple (Livy 1,12,4f.) vowed by Romulus to Jupiter if he would 'stay' the flight of the Romans before the Sabines. It stood in the Forum, near the Arch of Titus.

Numaque regia: traditionally the palace of Numa Pompilius, second king of Rome (Livy 1,18,5), it was later used as the official residence of the Pontifex Maximus. It stood in the Forum, near the temple of Vesta, and was given to the Vestals by Augustus. Some of its foundations are still visible.

Penatibus populi Romani: these were probably sacred objects said to have been brought by Aeneas from Troy (Virg. *Aen.* 3,148) and kept in the *penetralia Vestae*.

The different words for 'temple' in this sentence add variety and emphasis. See 20,3n.

opes: rich spoils of all kinds. *decora* means specifically 'works of art': cf. *H.* 3,71 *statuas, decora maiorum*.

monumenta ingeniorum: 'old and authentic records of men of genius'. Definitive texts of literary works are meant. The reference is probably not to losses from, e.g., the great Palatine Library, which survived the fire, but to texts in family archives.

2. **XIII Kal. Sextilis:** 19 July. The formula for expressing dates is so stereotyped that the *ante diem* can be omitted. Cf. the treatment of the money formula 18,3n.

quo et: *et quo* M puts the point of comparison in the wrong place, *eo quo* L lacks an essential element of the comparison. This seems the easiest and best correction.

The Gauls burned Rome on this day in 390 B.C. (Livy 5,39 & 6,1,11).

inflammauerint: subjunct. of virtual oblique - 'on which day the Senones too (they pointed out) fired the city they had captured'.

totidem annos f.: from 390 B.C. to A.D. 64 is (on Roman inclusive reckoning) 454 years: this can be expressed as 418 years, 418 months (34 years, 10 months) and 418 days (14 months). The calculation has about as much real significance as have attempts to express the names of, e.g., Napoleon or Hitler in terms of the number of the Beast in *Revelation* 13,18, and Tacitus' comment indicates his opinion of such activities.

Chapters 42-3 The rebuilding of Rome: Nero's new Palace.

Chapter 42

1. **ceterum:** transitional, not adversative. 'Meanwhile, Nero . . .'
Cf. 43,1.

domum: Nero's Golden House, which from all accounts was a lavish and luxurious estate, covering the Palatine and the Esquiline and most of the ground between, combined the grounds of a country house with the treasures of a museum and the mechanical contrivances which delighted Nero's heart. It was never completed, and never popular, being too opulent, too oriental and too aesthetic for the Roman senators. See M. P. Charlesworth in *JRS* 1950, 69f.: J. B. Ward-Perkins in *Antiquity* 1956, 209f.: M. P. O. Morford in *Eranos* 1968, 158f.

essent: the subjunctive expresses Nero's purpose.

luxu uulgata: '(things) long commonplace as regards luxury'.

arua et stagna f.: part of the wonder of the estate was the introduction of features usually reserved for country properties into the centre of Rome. It is interesting to compare Tacitus' account of the place with Suetonius' catalogue of its splendours (*Nero* 31): Tacitus mentions only

enough to indicate the sort of place it was, and passes on (*via* its architects) to further follies of Nero's engineering.

magistris et machinatoribus: 'architects and contractors'. Nothing more is known of them. For the noun in *-tor* cf. §2 and see 1,1 n.

denegauisset: generic subjunct., see 12,4 n. 'Who had the ability and the audacity to attempt artificially even such things as Nature had declined.' *denego* appears in the *Annals* only in this book – here, and at 57,1 and 62,1, all important contexts.

uiribus principis inludere: 'to fool away the resources of an emperor'.

2. **ab lacu Auerno:** by joining this inland lake, *via* Lake Lucrinus, to the Bay of Naples, Agrippa had in 37 B.C. created a safe harbour (cf. Virg. *Georg.* 2,161 f.). An inland waterway from there to Rome would have allowed corn ships and naval vessels to avoid a dangerous stretch of coastline (46,2), and also helped to drain some undesirable marshland (see below). It was a scheme which, like that to cut a Corinth canal (Suet. *Nero* 19) showed vision, but little grasp of the practical difficulties involved.

squalenti litore: 'along a barren shore or through a mountain barrier'. The difficulties are emphasised by their position, by the variety of construction, and by the vocabulary: *squaleo* is poetic (e.g. Virg. *Georg.* 1,507) and is used by Tacitus only here.

Pomptinae paludes: these lay behind Cape Circeo. They were malarial marshes, and many attempts were made to drain them, unsuccessfully, until about 1930.

nec satis causae: probably, in terms of the labour involved, a sound judgement.

cupitor: Nero's hankering after the impossible is represented as almost professional (see 1,1 n.). The noun appears first in Tacitus, and rarely elsewhere, and may have been coined by him. It is a neat description of one side of Nero's character, and connects him with Sallust's description of Catiline (*Cat.* 5,5) *animus . . . incredibilia . . . semper cupiebat*.

Chapter 43

1. **urbis quae domui supererat:** a caustic observation on Nero's palace. Cf. Suet. *Nero* 39,2 *Roma domus fiet: Veios migrate, Quirites, | Si non et Veios occupat ista domus*.

non . . . sed: Nero tried to turn the disaster to good purpose by proper town planning.

Gallica incendia: see 41,2 n.

cohibita . . . altitudine: emperors from Augustus to Trajan tried to limit the height of buildings in Rome, obviously with no great success.

areis: either inside or around the blocks of flats.

protegerent: the porticoes would provide shade, protection from passing traffic, and a flat roof from which to fight any future fires.

3. **Ostiensis paludes:** formed by the alluvial deposits at the mouth of the Tiber.

utique: *destinabat* controls the structure of §§3-4: the variation between accusative and noun clause helps to articulate the provisions without cataloguing them.

subiectassent: the verb (only here in Tacitus) is mainly poetical. Cf. Virg. *Aen.* 6,303.

sine trabibus: they had (probably on the ground floor) to be stone vaulted.

saxo Gabino Albanoue: from Gabii, on the road to Praeneste, and from Marino, by the Alban Lake, came much of the stone from which Imperial Rome was built. (The quarries at Gabii are still visible.) The Tabularium (Record Office) on the Capitol is faced with Gabine stone, the mouth of the Cloaca Maxima (Main Drain) with Alban.

quod . . . imperuius est: both stones are of volcanic origin, and so have already been tried in the fire. But they are also rough and not very decorative: hence the regulation to ensure their use.

4. **aqua:** subject of *fluere*, but given prominence by the structure. The diversion of public water for private (often ornamental) purposes was a perennial problem of Rome's *curatores aquarum*. Cf. Frontinus, *Aqued.* 2,74-6.

communione parietum: private houses had to be detached, and blocks of flats separated from one another. The abstract noun and the variation of construction emphasise the point.

5. **erant tamen f.:** there always are such people: and they sometimes (as here) have a point.

angustiae itinerum: the narrow streets of Rome were notorious in the ancient world. Cf. Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2,96.

solis uapores: high buildings and narrow streets provide more shade in a Mediterranean summer.

perrumperentur: subjunct. of virtual oblique: this is part of their case.

ardescere: used here metaphorically of the heat of the sun, but in the circumstances a very appropriate metaphor.

Chapter 44 *The Christians accused and punished.*

Chapter 44

1. **petita dis piacula**: 'next, they looked for means of appeasing the gods'. *dis* is dat.

Sibyllae libri: for the gen. see 39,2 n. The original books, said to have been bought from a Sibyl by Tarquinius Priscus, were destroyed when the Capitol was burned in 83 B.C. Unofficial versions of the contents were then current, until Augustus had a new and official collection made and deposited in the Palatine Library (A. 6,12).

supplicatum: Tacitus emphasises the ritual, and implies its pointlessness, by rare and ritual vocabulary. *supplico*, *matrona*, *perspergo* and *sellisternium* occur only here in his works, *propitio* only again at D. 9. *propitio* is archaic (cf. Plaut. *Poen.* 378), *perspergo* rare (cf. Cato R.R. 130: Cic. *De Or.* 1,159) and *sellisternium* almost unique – apart from its appearance in an inscription of the first century B.C. (*CIL* VI, 32323), it occurs only here and in Festus, a grammarian writing about A.D. 150.

Vulcano f.: the god of fire is, in the context, an obvious deity to appease: the temple of Ceres and Proserpina was near the Circus where the fire started: and Juno is the great state goddess of Rome.

apud proximum mare: at Ostia. The ritual cleansing of cult statues in sea water was both Greek (Eur. *I.T.* 1199) and Roman (Ovid, *Fast.* 4,136) religious practice.

sellisternia: the propitiation of the gods by formal banquets set before their images was introduced to Rome about 400 B.C. (Livy 5,13). The male gods, like the Roman men, reclined at table (*lectisternium*): the goddesses, like Roman women, sat on chairs (Val. Max. 2,1,1–2). *lectisternium* is often used (as in Livy) to describe the ceremony involving both, but here, where only women and female deities are concerned, Tacitus uses the rarer but more specific word.

2. **quin**: *non . . . decedebat infamia* is equivalent to a negative expression of hindering, and so takes an equivalent construction. Cf. 57,1.

Nero . . . Christianos: on this topic, and the interpretation of the rest of the chapter, see *Intro.* 5.

appellabat: perhaps 'was beginning to call'. The name originated (*Acts* 11,26) in Antioch, some twenty years before this date.

3. **procuratorem**: see 25,3 n. The name of his province is here omitted, because it is to be used two lines below: a typical Tacitean economy. Its omission also emphasises the alliteration of the initial *p*.

Pontium Pilatum: one of the few non-Christian references to him. See also Philo, *Leg. ad Gaium* 299f.: Josephus, *B.I.* 2,169f.

extiabilis superstitio: to a Roman, all foreign religions (except

Greek) were *superstitiones*: but the stories about Christianity made it seem a particularly deadly one. Cf. Suet. *Nero* 16 *superstitutionis nouae et maleficae*: Pliny *Ep.* 10,96 *superstitutionem prauam*.

quo cuncta . . . confluunt celebranturque: the alliteration points the bitter generalisation, which is not necessarily confined to religious rites.

4. **igitur**: see 37,2 n.

multitudo ingens: the term is rhetorically, but not grossly, exaggerated. Such terms (cf. *immensa strages* A. 6,19) are relative to the context: our news media would describe the loss of one hundred men from an army in the field as 'light casualties', but if an aeroplane crashed with similar losses, that would be a 'major disaster'. Both here and at A. 6,19 Tacitus is describing executions, and in such circumstances quite moderate numbers can give the impression of a holocaust.

odio humani generis: both Jews (cf. *H.* 5,5) and Christians were accused of hating their fellow men. Their 'separateness', their refusal to sacrifice to the community gods or to attend any public occasion connected with such sacrifice, their different moral standards, combined to give the Romans this impression of them. What therefore caused their condemnation was a feeling, not that they were guilty of arson, but that they deserved death in any case.

addita ludibria: they suffered not only death, but a shameful death.

laniatu canum: *laniatus* is rare and emotive, *canis* (though a common word) appears only here in Tacitus. Together they underline that human beings are suffering inhuman indignity.

crucibus adfixi f.: this text, though not entirely satisfactory, gives reasonable sense and syntax. They were to be savaged by dogs, or crucified, or used as human street lamps. These last would be dressed in the *tunica molesta*, a shirt made of inflammable material and lined with pitch. Cf. *Juv.* 8,235.

defecisset: the subjunct. may indicate repeated action (45,3 n.), or a subordinate clause in indirect speech.

nocturni luminis: the horror is heightened by the use of a Virgilian echo: cf. *Aen.* 7,13.

5. **hortos**: see 39,2 n.

spectaculo: it was a 'show' for the populace – like the hangings, drawings and quarterings of Tudor England.

unde: 'from which fact', i.e. because of Nero's callousness.

quamquam aduersus f.: 'although in face of men guilty and deserving exemplary punishment, pity arose . . .'

tamquam: this expresses, as often in Tacitus, not an unreal comparison, but the grounds of an oblique charge or reason. 'Because (they felt) they were being sacrificed . . .' Cf. 52,2: 73,1: 74,3.

non utilitate . . . sed in: the change of construction again emphasises the second half.

families' onto the public stage to diminish his own disgrace *si plures foedasset*.

15.33–47 THE YEAR AD 64

33–7 Acting and Orgies

As the year AD 64 commences (Bartera 2011: 173–4), the mercurial Nero's detachment from reality intensifies. Despite his overwhelming desire to appear on stage, he still feels some trepidation about performing in a Roman setting. So for his debut he chooses Naples, which could still be regarded as Greek, then planning to visit Greece itself (15.33). Undeterred when the theatre at Naples collapses, Nero drifts to Beneventum to see Vatinius' gladiatorial show (15.34). Then inexplicably abandoning his trip to Greece, he contemplates going to Egypt, until a mysterious panic attack in Vesta's temple keeps him in Rome (15.36). T. then offers his brilliant description of Tigellinus' banquet (15.37), epitomising the morally bankrupt world of Nero's principate. In the midst of Nero's listless meanderings, the ex-consul Torquatus Silanus, an eminent relative of Augustus (15.35), is forced to commit suicide. The context casts this shocking *scelus* as just another entertainment for the pleasure-seeking Nero (cf. *H.* 2.70–1, a similarly discordant juxtaposition). Finally, Nero even trumps the decadent debauchery of Tigellinus' banquet by infamously 'marrying' Pythagoras (Woodman 1998: 168–89; Champlin 2003: 153–77). Some interpret Nero's mock-wedding (15.37; Suet. *N.* 29; Dio 63.13) as a Hellenised celebration of the Floralia or an initiation rite into an oriental cult (Champlin 2003: 165–7). Yet T. presents it as the perfect prelude to the fire, as Nero's perverted wedding torches foreshadow the imminent destruction in Rome.

33.1 C. Laecanio M. Licinio consulibus: the standard formula for opening a year sits uncomfortably with the emperor's unconventional ambitions highlighted in the main clause. Pliny graphically describes Laecanius Bassus' death by disease during Vespasian's principate (*HN* 26.5), but his life remains obscure. Licinius Crassus Frugi (*PIR*¹ L 131), son of the consul for AD 27 (4.62.1), came from a prominent but ill-starred family descended from Pompey: his father, mother, and eldest brother were executed under Claudius (AD 47; Sen. *Apocol.* 1, Suet. *Cl.* 17, 29.1–2). Another brother was Galba's short-lived adoptee, Piso (*H.* 1.14.2). Licinius, himself indicted for treason, was executed under Nero between AD 66 and 68 (Pliny *Ep.* 1.5.3, *H.* 4.42). The family's remarkable underground tomb (including portrait busts, sarcophagi, and altars) was discovered in Rome (1884–5): 'Given the unfortunate and violent deaths of these men, it is easy to imagine why surviving family

members would have opted to bury them in a small underground tomb that would not attract attention or arouse suspicion of future political threat from the Licinian family' (Van Keuren et al. 2003: 65). **acriore in dies cupidine adigebatur:** the notion that tyrants are susceptible to passions is well established in the Greek tradition (Plato *RP* 9.577d; 9.572e–573e for εἶρος itself as tyrant). The comparative adjective (placed prominently), enveloping assonance, 'sandwiched' time phrase (*in dies*), and verb in the imperfect tense capture the escalating pressure gradually gripping Nero. Cf. Suetonius' simpler description: *prodire in scaenam concupit* (*N.* 20.1). T.'s *adigo* (*ad* + *ago*) elegantly expresses Nero's desire to become an *actor*. **promiscas scaenas frequentandi** 'to appear on public stages'. The genitive gerund (*OLD* *frequento* 7b) depends on *cupidine*. Only here in extant Latin does *promiscas* modify *scaenas*. Nero allegedly habitually quoted a Greek saying that 'hidden music counts for nothing' (Suet. *N.* 20.1; cf. Gell. 13.31.3). **Iuuenalibus ludis:** Nero celebrated his 'youth games' (AD 59) to coincide with the first shaving of his beard – an important occasion for a Roman young man, prompting special celebrations. Octavian attended a lavish festival (Dio 48.34.3). Nero went much further by performing on the lyre (14.15.4). Yet that theatre, though big, was in his private gardens near the Tiber (Pliny *HN* 37.19). **quos ut parum celebres ... spernebat:** 26.1n. *parum habiles*. T. acerbically focalises through Nero, now bombastically considering the youth games (antecedent of *quos*) too sparsely attended and restrictive for his impressive voice. **tantae uoci angustos:** sc. *nimis*. T.'s ellipse avoids the obvious contrast (*parum ~ nimis*) for failing to achieve the right degree of something (e.g. Sen. *Ep.* 70.13: *parum fortiter ... nimis temere*). Others call Nero's voice weak and husky (Suet. *N.* 20.1; Dio 61.20.2; cf. [Lucian] *Nero* 6 'tolerably and moderately tuneful'). Thrasea's enemy Cossutianus Capito predictably praises his *caelestis uox* (16.22.1).

33.2 Romae: locative. Nero's timidity is only temporary. Soon (AD 65) he will perform publicly in Rome (16.4). **Neapolim quasi Graecam urbem delegit** 'he chose Naples as being a Greek city' (causal *quasi*, *OLD* 5a; G-G 1256). Suetonius confirms this, though without explaining the choice (*N.* 20.2). Neapolis (mod. Naples; *OCDB*; Oakley 1998: 633–6) was founded by Chalcis via Cumae (seventh century BC). 'In 326BC Neapolis struck a most favourable treaty with Rome, of which an unforeseen consequence was that Greek language and culture was able to flourish within her walls well into the Principate' (Oakley 1998: 636). Greek games ('Sebasta'), established for Augustus (probably in AD 2), were held every four years in early August, with drama and music added later (Vell. 2.123.1, Suet. *Aug.* 98.5; Dio 56.29.2; Swan 2004: 101–3; Gibson 2006: 309; Wardle 2014: 548). The hugely important festival was integrated into

the wider circuit of Greek games. *otiosa* ... *Neapolis* (Hor. *Epod.* 5.43) was indelibly associated with leisure (Watson 2003: 219), particularly the *otium* to compose literature (Virg. *G.* 4.563–6). Statius was born here (AD 45). The city suited Nero's temperament: he withdrew there after murdering his mother (14.10.3). **inde** ... **fore, ut**: T. switches to *oratio obliqua* but omits an introductory verb. Further focalisation through Nero exposes his grandiose but foolish plans. *ut* introduces a purpose clause. **Achaia**: this is the official name for the Roman province (*OCD*³; cf. Achaea, indicating the territory of the Achaean league; Oliver 1980: 77 n. 6), established by Augustus (27 BC), coupled with Moesia (AD 15), then decoupled (AD 44), and freed from taxation by Nero (AD 66). **insignesque** ... **coronas adeptus**: the adverb *antiquitus* (12× in T., absent from the minor works; a Caesarian favourite, 7× in Livy, absent from Cicero) only qualifies *sacras*. Nero assumes that by participating he will automatically win the garlands awarded as prizes in Greek contests. The lack of genuine competition must devalue any such victory. By the AD 70s, victors were not actually crowned, but were entitled to announce that their *patria* was being crowned (Pliny *HN* 7.97, 16.10). 'That the *honour* of the victory belonged as much to the city as to the victor himself was ... well-established' (Beagon 2005: 285). Instead, Nero personally receives and keeps his *sacrae coronae* in his bedroom (Suet. *N.* 25.2). **maiore fama studia ciuium eliceret** 'he could entice the enthusiasm of his citizens by his heightened reputation' (*OLD fama* 5).

33.3 ergo: 20.4n. **contractum** ... **manipuli**: T. enumerates the disparate groups with marked periphrasis and polysyndeton, moving from the Neapolitans (*oppidanorum*) outwards through Italy (*coloniis et municipiis*; the pair is 'frequently used to designate the Italian towns generally, and sometimes, e.g. 3.55.3, comes almost to = "Italy"', Goodyear 1981: 178). Their numbers seem to overwhelm the theatre, prefiguring its collapse. The picture recalls the spectators for Claudius' sea-battle on the Fucine lake (*montium edita* ... *multitudo innumera compleuit, proximis e municipiis et alii urbe ex ipsa, uisendi cupidine aut officio in principem*, 12.56.3). **eius rei fama ciuerat**: *fama* in T. often has a disruptive and double-edged role (Hardie 2012: 284–313; frequently [285–6] '*fama* acts independently of human agents, suggesting a world where rational choices on the part of individuals are overwhelmed by a supra-personal and often quasi-personified force'). Here *fama* (repeated so soon after *maiore fama*) is disparaging (particularly with the defining genitive *eius rei*): whereas Nero had imagined an enhanced reputation from his artistic victories in Greece, these onlookers are drawn by the widespread 'talk' (*OLD fama* 4) that their emperor will really perform. Simple *cieo* for the compound *accio* with an abstract subject is striking. It often features in military contexts (*TLL* s.v. *cieo* 1055.50–69), hinting at *fama* as a commander. **Caesarem**: T. could have said *Neronem*

(unless *sectantur* is a genuine present and this means 'emperor'), but *Caesarem* accentuates Nero's office (and hence his degradation of the role of *princeps*). **per honorem aut uarios usus** 'through esteem or for various purposes' (causal *per*, *OLD* 13). The generalising alternative *uarii usus* bathetically highlights the cynically self-serving motives of some well-wishers. Nero's entourage was paid to applaud elaborately at his performances in so-called Alexandrian style (Suet. *N.* 20.3). For T., inappropriate followers in Nero's court, including actors and eunuchs, become a byword for notoriety (cf. *immixtis histrionibus et spadonum gregibus et cetero Neronianae aulae ingenio*, *H.* 2.71.1). **sectantur**: the frequentative verb (*OLD sector* 5), here best taken as historic present, underscores that courting the emperor is habitual. One such lackey was the future emperor Vitellius (*Neronem* ... *sectari cantantem solitus*, *H.* 2.71.1, with pleonasm). **etiam militum manipuli**: indignant *etiam* (often climatic in such lists: cf. *multique etiam ignoti*, 3.1.2; *feminae etiam*, 15.48.1) articulates incredulity. The soldiers are probably praetorians, but the more general term adds alliteration and evokes Livian phrasing avoided by other authors. 'Originally a manipulus comprised two centuries and was equivalent to a thirtieth of a legion; the unit had long since become obsolete in practice, but T. retains the term throughout his works' (WK 228). **theatrum Neapolitanorum**: only some physical remains of this substantial theatre survive (De Caro and Greco 1981: 23–6; Macchiaroli 1985: 209–13). Claudius produced a Greek comedy here (AD 42; Suet. *Cal.* 3.2; *Cl.* 11.2). Statius describes two huge Neapolitan theatres, one open and one covered (*Silu.* 3.5.91).

34.1 plerique ut arbitrabantur, triste, ut ipse: sc. *arbitratur*; 23.3n. *ipse*. Polarised *plerique* (emphatically displaced from its clause) and *ipse* in parallel constructions (marked by anaphora of *ut*) isolates Nero's uniquely warped perception. T. often highlights divergent interpretations of the same event (e.g. Caesar's assassination: *aliis pessimum, aliis pulcherrimum facinus uideretur*, 1.8.6). **triste** ... **prouidum**: neuter adjectives used as substantives. **prouidum potius et secundis numinibus** 'instead as providential and signifying divine favour' (*et* is epexegetic, explaining *prouidum* more precisely). Expansive, alliterative, polysyllabic language reflects Nero's frenzied optimism. The ablative absolute *secundis numinibus*, an elevated alternative to *secundis rebus* (ubiquitous in Latin), has epic resonance (*Sil.* 3.116, the only other occurrence). In Nero's speech at Corinth liberating the province of Greece (AD 67), he celebrates the gods' forethought for him on land and on sea (Smallwood 1984: no. 64, line 24). **uacuum et sine ullius noxa**: *uariatio* of adjective and prepositional phrase (Sörbom 1935: 92–3). The combination *sine* and *noxa*, common in medical contexts (Celsus 8×) and technical writing

(Columella 8x), is almost exclusively prosaic (except Ovid *M.* 15.334). The near miss contrasts sharply with the disaster near Fidenae (AD 27): 50,000 were maimed or killed when the amphitheatre collapsed (4.63.1). **theatrum collapsum est:** T. reserves the crucial detail until the sentence's end. In Suetonius, Nero continues singing even while an earthquake shakes the theatre (*N.* 20.2). **ergo:** 20.4n. The connecting causal particle caustically questions Nero's logic (likewise, 15.44.2) in celebrating this narrow escape with a musical performance, although most regard it as *triste*. Again, Nero's emotional reactions are abnormally extreme (cf. *ipse ut laetitiae, ita maeroris immodicus egit*, 15.23.3). **per compositos cantus** 'through specially composed songs'. Nero presumably wrote them himself, but this is not explicit. T. generally downplays Nero's activities as a composer, accentuating instead his role as performer (Ash 2016b: 28). **grates dis atque ... fortunam celebrans:** by zeugma *grates* (20.1n.) is the object of *celebrans* alongside *fortunam*: one would normally expect *agens + grates* (Oakley 2009: 198). The notion of Nero 'celebrating' his gratitude to the gods (not just thanking them) sounds hyperbolic, while *ipsam recentis casus fortunam* ('the actual [good] fortune of the recent collapse') manifests wordplay (*casus* can also mean 'misfortune', recalling the majority's viewpoint). Nero's inappropriate celebration foreshadows his notorious performance during the fire in Rome (15.39.3). **petiturusque maris Hadriae traiectus** 'intending to head to the crossing-places of the Adriatic sea'. The predicative future participle expressing purpose 'goes back at least to [Caes.] *Afr.* 65.3 and was continued by Livy' who used participles innovatively (Oakley 1997: 585; K-S §136.4, p.761; *NLS* §92d). T. has *traiectus* (*OLD* 2b) only here. The noun *Hadriae* in apposition to *maris* is lofty: the usual Latin construction is adjectival (*Hadriaticum mare*). The Adriatic was notoriously stormy (Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 205), but Nero remains undeterred, despite the recent accident. **apud Beneuentum interim consedit:** 23.2n. *apud*. T. likes *consido + apud* (*H.* 5.14.1, *A.* 6.50.1), first attested at Cicero *Fam.* 15.4.2, but apparently rare (*TLL*s.v. *consido* 434.60–4; Woodman 2017: 284). Beneventum (*OCID*³) in southern Italy on the Appian Way (*en route* to Nero's destination, Brundisium) was famously renamed from the inauspicious-sounding Maleventum (Livy 9.27.14, Pliny *HN* 3.105; Oakley 2005a: 328–9). This inversion recalls the *triste ~ prouidum* polarisation above (15.34.1, where *euēnit* by paronomasia perhaps hints at this aetiology of Beneventum later in the same chapter): Beneventum is a good setting for the relentlessly optimistic Nero. **a Vatīnio:** Nero's courtier Vatinius (*RE* 4; Dio 62.15) is one of T.'s memorable minor characters. Otho presents him as a general debased type, epitomising Nero's corrupt principate (*H.* 1.37.5) and Maternus describes his *potentia* (*D.* 11.2). Cups with four long spouts were named 'Vatinian' because of his big nose (Mart. 10.3.4, 14.96, Juv.

5.46). Martial fulminates against upstart tradesmen producing gladiatorial shows (3.16, cobbler; 3.59 fuller; cf. Petronius 45.4, more positive about such benefactors).

34.2 inter foedissima eius aulae ostenta: *inter* suggests that (despite the superlative *foedissima*) Nero's court contained even fouler creatures than Vatinius. *foedus* was 'applied ... to adversaries in the language of late-republican insult' (Horsfall 2003: 246). The superlative expresses *indignatio*: Cicero has over one-third of extant occurrences (22 of 60), but T. comes second (10x). There is neat inversion: Vatinius produces the show, but is himself a 'phenomenon' on display (*OLD ostentum* b). **sutrinae tabernae alumnus:** cf. Caligula, *legionum alumnus* (1.44.1). T. combines lofty (*alumnus*) and everyday (*sutrinae tabernae*) language, aptly reflecting Vatinius' peculiar mix of power and vulgarity. The adjective *sutrina* is only here in T., and rare elsewhere. Both Juvenal (*Beneuentani sutoris*, 5.46) and Martial (*sutoris ... Vatini*, 14.96.1) designate Vatinius by his trade as cobbler. Such invective underpins forensic oratory, as lawyers courted aristocratic audiences' social prejudices (Craig 2004: 190). Vatinius was not a 'hands on' cobbler (perhaps his father had been), but a businessman sufficiently wealthy to produce a lavish gladiatorial show for which even 'the senatorial *census* was insufficient' (Malloch 2013: 337). **corpore detorto, facetiis scurrilibus:** T. has the adjective *scurrilis* only here (Dio 63.15.1 quotes one of Vatinius' jokes), casting Vatinius as a low-class *scurra* (Corbett 1986), a professional court jester characterised by wit and physical deformities (Cic. *Verr.* II 3.146, Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.52–70, Lucian *Symp.* 18). Claudius, before becoming emperor, discredibly loitered with *scurrae* (12.49.1). The two descriptive ablative phrases in asyndeton mirror (but debase) the lofty *corpus ~ animus* historiographical mode of characterisation (e.g. 4.1.3; Sall. *BC* 5.3, Livy 21.4.5, Vell. 2.127.3). Vatinius' physical appearance (also reflected in his name, 'Bandy-legged'; cf. Pliny *HN* 11.254) is meant to offer insights into his character. The archetype combining wit, physical deformity, and low class is Homer's Thersites (*Il.* 2.216–19), bowlegged and lame, with hunched shoulders and pointy head. **in contumelias adsumptus** 'adopted as a target for insults'. Callous cavalier treatment of the physically deformed was not restricted to Nero's court (cf. Suet. *Tib.* 61.6). **dehinc:** 23.4n. **optimi cuiusque criminatione:** Vatinius retaliates by informing against *optimi*: the superlative enhances black-and-white moralism. Romans saw the transition from *scurra* to *delator* as natural. Both used words to gain power (cf. Hor. *Sat.* 1.4.84–5 on the untrustworthy *scurra*, talented at concocting stories). **gratia pecunia ui nocendi:** the asyndetic tricolon crescendo (ablatives of means) climactically enumerates the nature of Vatinius' power. His influence (*gratia*) derives from his relationship with Nero and collective fear of him as

informer; his money derives from successful prosecutions (informers won some of the accused's property). Both factors allow him to do harm (*ui* develops the notion of strength in the main verb *uauit*). Maternus later shattered his influence, probably soon after Nero's principate: *Vatini potentiam fregi* (*D.* 11.2; Kragelund 1987: 202). **etiam malos praemineret** 'he towered above even bad men'. In baseness Vatinius is now without rivals (cf. *inter foedissima ... ostenta*). Despite his gnarled body, he metaphorically looms over others. The rare compound *praemineo* (4×, only in *A.*; 4× outside *T.*) is a Sallustian coinage (*H.* 2.82).

35.1 frequentanti Neroni: dative of agent with *cessabatur*. A verbal echo (*cupidine ... scaenas frequentandi*, 15.33.1) almost casts Nero as part of the show. **cessabatur:** 'The impersonal use of *cesso* ... occurs from Livy onwards (*TLL* s.v. *cesso* 962.54ff; *WM* 259). **isdem quippe illis diebus:** 1.2n. *quippe*. *T.* favours the *isdem diebus* formula (9× *H.*, 8× *A.*; 1× each, *Cic. Caes.*, *Liv.*; *WM* 477; Malloch 2013: 381) for implying chronological precision without real anchorage. He indignantly casts Silanus' death as just another entertainment for Nero. **Torquatus Silanus:** the anastrophe of names (20.2n.) perhaps plays on *Torquatus* / *torqueo*. Decimus Iunius Silanus Torquatus (*OCD*³; *RE* 182; *PIR*² J 837; Syme 1986: 188–99), consul in AD 53 (12.58.1), came from an illustrious but unlucky family, whose corpses litter the *A.*: the month June was even renamed for inauspiciously evoking the Iunii (16.12.2). Perhaps most striking is that Nero waited until AD 64 to eliminate Decimus. His father Marcus Silanus (consul AD 19) married Augustus' great-granddaughter Aemilia Lepida (2.59.1). That pedigree proved deadly for the five children ('foredoomed to splendour and tribulation', Syme 1986: 188). The oldest brother, Marcus Silanus (consul AD 46), nicknamed the 'golden sheep' by Caligula, was poisoned while proconsul of Asia (AD 54), allegedly through Agrippina's intervention (13.1.1, the infamous 'first death' of Nero's principate). The youngest brother, Lucius Silanus (praetor AD 48), formerly betrothed to Claudius' daughter Octavia, was expelled from the senate (charged with incest with his sister). He committed suicide (AD 49) on the day when Claudius married Agrippina (12.4, 12.8.1; *Sen. Apocol.* 8, *Dio* 60.31.8). Their sister, Junia Calvina, was banished from Italy (12.8.1), but Nero, courting public goodwill, recalled her (AD 59) after Agrippina's death (14.12.3). She survived into the AD 70s (*Suet. Vesp.* 23.4). The other sister, Junia Lepida, was also charged with incest (AD 65): her fate is unknown (16.8.2). **mori adigitur:** Silanus is compelled to die, whereas Nero was compelled by desire to perform (*cupidine adigebatur*, 15.33.1). **Iuniae familiae claritudinem:** although *T.* in the minor works prefers *claritas* to *claritudo* (both 3× each in the *H.*), the archaising *claritudo* (a Sallustian favourite) dominates in the *A.* (31×; cf. 2× *claritas*; *MW* 108, *Ash* 2007: 303,

WK 320). As often in *T.*, the more recherché term becomes standard. The illustrious *gens Iunia* goes back to Iunius Brutus (founder of the republic): that should trump the connection to Augustus, but is relegated to a prepositional clause. **diuum Augustum abauum ferebat:** in a *recitatio*, homoioteleuton and elision (Riggsby 1991) would give an impressively long, resonant object (*diuu(m) Augustu(m) abauum*). Silanus claimed (*OLD fero* 32) the divine Augustus as his great-great-grandfather – a dangerous heritage, since Nero too is Augustus' great-great-grandson. Seneca, addressing Nero, simply calls Augustus *abauus tuus* (*Clem.* 1.10.1). Connection to Augustus mattered: cf. Germanicus (*auunculum Augustum ferens*, 2.43.5) and Nero's father (*Augustum auunculum praeferebat*, 4.75).

35.2 obicere: sc. *eum ... esse*. **prodigum largitionibus:** financial problems stereotypically plague revolutionaries: cf. Catiline's *inopia rei familiaris* (*Sall. BC* 5.7) and his followers' *egestas* (*BC* 14.3). The accusation is not straightforwardly that Silanus is poor (cf. Tigellinus denouncing *Sullam inopem*, 14.57.3). His generosity suggests bribery (another revolutionary motif: cf. Otho, *quosdam ... pecunia ... iuuare*, *H.* 1.23.1) and hedonism. Dio speculates that the extravagant Silanus deliberately sought to avoid being targeted for prosecution (62.27.2; cf. Pallas, allegedly poisoned because Nero wanted his money, 14.65.1). **quin <inter libertas> habere** 'and furthermore that he had' (emphatic adverb; *OLD quin* 3). *M* reads *quine innobiles habere*, variously emended by editors (including *quin inter libertos habere*, *quin eum ignobiles habere*). It seems simplest to bracket *innobiles* as a gloss. **ab epistulis et libellis et rationibus:** Silanus' (innocent) nephew will face identical charges (AD 65; 16.8.1). Although large, private households must have required such administrators, the names were now the imperial household's prerogative. These freedmen had different responsibilities (*OLD ab* 24c, idiomatically indicating the individual's department): *ab epistulis* (correspondence), *a libellis* (legal and other petitions), and *a rationibus* (accounts). The other such post in the emperor's household was the freedman *a studiis* (cultural adviser; *Suet. Cl.* 28). **nomina summae curae et meditamenta** 'titles indicating the highest responsibility – and rehearsals [for it]'. The descriptive genitive *summae curae* (*OLD cura* 9) suggests the principate. A factual point about the titles is followed pithily by a speculative inference. *T.* accentuates the accusation's most outrageous element with an attention-grabbing coinage, *meditamentum* (elsewhere only *H.* 4.26.3, *Gell.* 2×), an alternative for *meditatio*.

35.3 intimus quisque libertorum uincti abreptique: sc. *sunt*. *T.* often uses *quisque* with a plural (*G-L* §211, remark 1; *constructio ad sensum*). **et cum damnatio instaret:** the abstract noun as subject of *insto* (*OLD* 6) suggests personification (likewise, 6.18.2; also *instantem damnationem*, 16.8.3). 'The expr. seems restricted to *T.*' (Woodman 2017: 162). Whether *T.* omits the

trial or Silanus killed himself beforehand, the ellipse scornfully highlights this devalued legal system. **uenas** . . . **interscidit**: pre-emptive suicide avoided brutal execution and usually allowed the accused's will to stand (6.29.1, but cf. 4.20.1, 15.62.1; MW 149). The rare compound *interscindo* (only here in T., liked by Seneca the Younger) varies *abscindo* (15.69.2, 16.11.2). As suicides proliferate in the narrative, T. must innovate linguistically. **ex more**: Torquatus' fate 'reveals Nero's now habitual attitude (*ex more*) toward those he suspects and the belated promise of clemency that he offers once it is too late' (Dowling 2006: 329 n. 55). Conveniently belated pledges of *clementia* after suicides typify other *principes* (e.g. Tiberius, 2.31.3, 3.50.2), not just Nero (who can display timely clemency, 16.8.3). **quamuis sontem et defensionis merito diffisum**: 'in A. 11–16 *sons* and *insons* outweigh the synonyms *nocens* and *innocens* (the dominant pair from the late republic onwards) by almost 4:1' (Adams 1972: 358). After *quamuis sontem* (cf. *quamuis nocenti*, 2.31.3) Nero pleonastically adds another clause (accentuated by enveloping alliteration) asserting Silanus' guilt. **clementiam iudicis**: *clementia* is a 'spoilt' term which T. frequently depreciates by sarcasm (Goodyear 1970: 37). Seneca addressed the *De clementia* to Nero (AD 55), showcasing *clementia* as an imperial virtue (cf. Nero *clementiam suam obstringens crebris orationibus*, 13.11.2). Delivering it retroactively is not what Seneca intended. Nero describes himself grandly in the third person as *iudex* in a *maiestas* trial (Talbert 1984: 477). He probably used Torquatus' gardens for the *arcus Neroniani* which supplied water to the Golden House (Frontinus *Aq.* 5.6; Evans 1994: 118–20).

36.1 omissa in praesens Achaia: Nero will visit Greece (AD 66; Dio 63.12). Livy likes *omitto* + country / city to convey abandoning military activity (e.g. 37.15.6, *omissa in praesentia Epheso*). Yet Nero suspends a (projected) artistic tour. **(causae in incerto fuere)**: *in* (OLD 37) + ablative neuter singular adjective functions as a predicate. The candid parenthesis about the limits of T.'s knowledge adds credibility elsewhere when he claims knowledge (WM 93; Ash 2007: 83): *adfert aliquam fidem ueritatis et dubitatio* (Quint. 9.2.19). The comment casts Nero as whimsical, although potentially good reasons existed for staying in Italy (e.g. Tiridates' impending visit). **urbem reuisit**: T. has *reuiso* (itself not rare) only here. The only other occurrence with *urbs* before T. is in Lucretius, describing the archetypal 'restless man', always changing physical location without deriving emotional satisfaction: *urbem petit atque reuisit* (DRN 3.1067). T. usually has *in urbem* and *redire* (1.30.5, 3.64.1, 5.1.1). **prouincias Orientis . . . secretis imaginationibus agitans**: the appended nominative participle clause (1.3n. *rogitans*) complicates the simple main clause by focalising through Nero, still driven by centrifugal impulses even after returning to Rome. The language is simultaneously elliptical (*prouincias agitare* for *iter ad*

prouincias agitare) and expansive: the polysyllabic *imaginationibus* (only here in T.) is rare, previously attested only in Pliny the Elder (3×). **Aegyptum**: Nero's grandfather Germanicus had toured Egypt (AD 19; 2.59–61). This 'land of inversion' (Plaza 2006: 318), long seen as unsurpassed for marvellous phenomena, is an apt destination for Nero, *incredibilium cupitor* (15.42.2). He allegedly sent an expedition to Ethiopia to discover the Nile's sources (Sen. *NQ* 6.8.3–5), although this was perhaps reconnaissance for a war (Pliny *HN* 6.181, 184–6, 12.18–19). **dehinc**: 23.4n. **edicto testificatus**: emperors sometimes felt pressure to leave Rome (e.g. Tiberius during the mutinies, 1.47.1; cf. 3.47.2). Extended absences could trigger expressions of yearning (e.g. Horace to Augustus in Gaul: *abes iam nimium diu*, *C.* 4.5.2). The higher Roman magistrates communicated by edict (*OCDB*), as did emperors (Millar 1977: 252–9). Edicts, originally oral proclamations, were written documents displayed in public, giving instructions about immediate local circumstances. Nero's edict seems histrionic and premature. **sui absentiam**: 4.1n. *famam sui*. This subjective use of the genitive is very unusual (*NLS* §74 n.1). Nero solipsistically presupposes that his trip will cause acute anxiety. **perinde immota ac prospera**: the pairing, unattested elsewhere, is expressively misleading. The fire, Pisonian conspiracy, and civil wars (cf. *H.* 1.16.3, *in hoc concussi orbis motu*) are all looming, with an earthquake recently noted (15.22.2, *motu terrae*). **super**: 5.4n. *super*. **adiit**: this approach is specifically for religious purposes (*OLD adeo*¹ gb).

36.2 Vestae: Vesta's circular temple in the Forum Romanum below the Capitoline hill dates from the temple fire (241 BC), although its forebear had probably existed since the regal period (Littlewood 2006: 80). Vesta (*OCDB*), goddess of the hearth and central to Roman state religion, supposedly guarded the flame brought by Aeneas from Troy (Prop. 4.4.69; Hutchinson 2006: 131). Since men were normally barred from entering her shrine (Ov. *F.* 6.254; Littlewood 2006: 86), Nero's conduct is transgressive (although he will soon 'become' female in his mock-marriage, 15.37.4). **repente**: 19.2n. **cunctos per artus tremens**: 1.2n. *tot per annos*. Suetonius says that the fringe of Nero's garment got caught when he rose to leave (*N.* 19.1). T. avoids the mundane, highlighting instead the physical manifestation of Nero's psychological turmoil. **seu numine exterrente, seu**: 4.3n. *exterret*. The alternative explanations display deliberate imbalance (causal ablative absolute, then a syntactically more complex adjectival phrase). Typically, although the disjunctive particles *seu* . . . *seu* maintain formal neutrality, T. often emphasises the second alternative (Sullivan 1976; Whitehead 1979). **facinorum recordatione**: murdering family members traditionally unleashes a guilty conscience (Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 67). Nero has already killed his adoptive brother Britannicus

(13.15–16) and mother Agrippina (14.1–9). **numquam timore uacuis:** litotes strengthens the expression. T. previously cited the Platonic concept (*Gorgias* 524E) about the tormented tyrant's transgressions scarring his soul (6.6.2; cf. Eur. *Ion* 621–8, Xen. *Hier.* 2.8–10, Sen. *Contr.* 1.7.2, 4.7). Nero is especially afraid after murdering Agrippina (14.10.1), which allegedly triggered guilt-ridden nightmares (Suet. *N.* 46.1), and again after the Pisonian conspiracy (*magis magisque pauido Nerone*, 15.58.1). The 'sword of Damocles' hanging over the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius (Cic. *Tusc.* 5.61–2; Hor. *C.* 3.1.17–19) expressively illustrates the typical tyrant's terror. **deseruit inceptum:** this simple main clause (engulfed by the 'super-structure' of elaborate subordinate clauses) evokes epic. Elsewhere only Virgil (*A.* 9.694, 11.469–70) and Statius (*Th.* 9.83) have the phrase. **cunctas sibi curas ... leuiiores** 'all his concerns ... were lighter' (*sibi* = dative of interest; G-L §350). The alliterative phrase suggests a *princeps'* administrative burdens (cf. *regendi cuncta onus*, 1.11.1). Yet Nero planned to visit Egypt for pleasure. Cf. Pliny eulogising Trajan (*solus omnium curas laboresque suscepit*, *Ep.* 3.20.12), symbolically cast as Hercules on coinage (Sherwin-White 1966: 262). **amore patriae:** the genitive is expressively ambiguous. Initially it seems objective ('love for his fatherland'), but the following *oratio obliqua* clarifies it as subjective ('love of his fatherland [for him]') and self-centred. **dictitans:** 6.4n.

36.3 uidisse ... audire: sc. *sc.* 17.2n *non ... habere*. Nero plays the benignly vigilant *princeps*, but inadvertently evokes the oppressive atmosphere of state surveillance (*Agr.* 45.2; cf. *qui uultum genitus, occultum etiam murmur exciperent*, 6.24.1). Policing facial expressions typifies authoritarian regimes (16.5.2), where people often mask their true feelings (*H.* 2.65.1, *laetitiā ... uolū ferens, animo anxius*; Ash 2007: 219), but Nero presupposes sincerity. The infinitives, heading their clauses and arranged asyndetically (cf. *audiuisse ... uidisse*, 12.6.2), switch vividly from perfect to present tense. **maestos ciuium uultus:** 16.4n. *maesti*. Nero perceives sadness in all citizens, but his selective vision overlooks the discontent amongst *senatus et primores* (15.36.4). After his death, only the *plebs sordida*, the *delerrimi seruorum*, and the bankrupt are *maesti* (*H.* 1.4.3). **secretas querimonias:** the idea is that unsolicited comments delivered in private are sincere (cf. Germanicus secretly monitoring his soldiers, 2.13.1), but Nero's surveillance of private conversations is meant to seem alarming; cf. Pliny's assertion that only hated rulers violate *secreta nostra* (*Pan.* 68.6). **tantum <itineris> aditurus:** Nero contemplating (but swiftly abandoning) a trip to the eastern provinces ironically echoes the Parthian Tiridates (*tantum itineris aditurus*, 30.2n.), who actually made the long journey (Syme 1958: 725). **cuius ne modicos quidem egressus tolerarent** 'when they could not endure even his brief departures'; 1.2n.

tolerabant. In practice, during his principate Nero was often absent from Rome, but not Italy. The great exception is when he toured Greece (AD 67). **aduersum fortuna:** 21.3n. *aduersum*. Suetonius caustically distinguishes between disasters caused by Nero as *princeps* and chance events (*N.* 39.1). The neuter plural functions as a substantive (*OLD fortuna* 1b), perhaps hinting proleptically at the great fire, now imminent (15.38.1, *forte*). **aspectu principis refoueri:** citizens refreshed by seeing their leader is a topos (WM 428, ironically inverted, 3.59.4). Cf. Horace, flattering the absent Augustus by urging him to return to Italy (*uultus ubi tuus | adfulsit populo, gratior it dies*, *C.* 4.5.6–7). The metaphorical force of *refoueo* is wry: it involves (re)heating (*OLD* 1), hinting at Nero as the sun / Apollo (Suet. *N.* 53); or fire-starter. **ergo: 20.4n. ut in priuatis necessitudinibus proxima pignora praeualerent, ita populum Romanum uim plurimam habere** 'just as in private relationships the closest connections prevail, so the Roman people exerted the greatest influence [with him]' (*OLD necessitudo* 1; *OLD pignus* 4b). In taut alliterative language, Nero exploits the analogy of the family, implicitly projecting himself as *pater patriae* (a title accepted 'between late 55 and late 56', Griffin 1984: 252 n. 73). Cf. Tiberius: what befitted moderate households did not befit emperors and an imperial people (3.6.1). Nero correlates public and private positively, but soon his Golden House, a private residence, will ruthlessly annex Rome's public space (*urbis quae domui supererant*, 15.43.1). It is caustically ironic for the murderer of close relatives to deploy this cosy family analogy. The ruler as benevolent father (ironically deployed here) was a panegyric topos (Kraus 1994a: 174). **populum Romanum:** Nero's language recalls the 'demophilia' topos from Athenian oratory, whereby speakers risk criticism for seducing the *demos* with specious claims of affection (Scholtz 2004: 265–71): 'men of Athens, though they say they love you, it is not you they love but themselves' (Demosthenes 53.3), while people should not 'pay heed to those who claim to love the *demos* yet bring it to utter ruin' (Isocrates 8.121). **parendumque retinenti:** this is an elliptical expression for *parendumque a se esse ei ipsum retinenti*, 'and he should obey it [sc. the Roman people] which was holding him back'.

36.4 uolentia 'welcome' (*OLD uolens* 2; cf. *OLD* 1 'willing'). This use of the participle is 'probably a Sallustian innovation under Thucydides' direct influence' (Goodyear 1981: 85; *uolentia plebi*, Sall. *H.* 4.42 M). **uoluptatum cupidine ... metuenti:** 12.3n. *praecipua*; 25.4n. *metueret*. The relative pronoun *quae* (antecedent *rei frumentariae*) for *cuius* (*cura est* takes a genitive for the object of concern) has been attracted into the nominative case of *cura*. The co-ordinated causal ablative noun (varying *cupidus uoluptatum*, Sall. *Bf* 95.3, Cic. *Fin.* 2.63) and dative participle (agreeing with *plebi* above) portray the populace as obsessed by pleasures and anxiety about

the food supply. Is this typical aristocratic condescension (cf. Juvenal's *panem et Circenses*, *Sat.* 10.81)? Although *uoluptatum* builds alliteratively on *uolentia*, casting the *plebs* as pleasure-seeking, the more elaborate syntax about the food supply highlights the main priority (*praecipua cura*, expressively trumping Nero's generalising *cunctas ... curas*, 15.36.2). Most significantly, the people ignore Nero's pompous rhetoric and consider the real impact of his potential absence. The present tense *est* suggests the observation's timeless validity. **rei frumentariae angustias:** Nero's earlier strategy (dumping grain in the Tiber to suggest a surplus, 15.18.2) has failed. Since Egypt supplied Rome with grain, popular fears about shortages underscore what Nero should be doing in the province: the *plebs* seems more responsible than the emperor, particularly given the juxtaposition with Tigellinus' lavish banquet (15.37). **si abesset** 'if he were absent'. The counterfactual conditional depends on *metuenti*. The apodosis ('[then there would be] a shortage of grain') is embedded in *angustias* (G-L §601 'involution of the apodosis'). **primores:** 1.2n. **in incerto erant, procul an coram atrocior haberetur:** sc. Nero. 17.2n. *in incerto*; *OLD habeo* 24 ('regard' + predicate). Cf. Sallust's Jugurtha, such a clever and experienced soldier *ut, absens an praesens ... perniciosior esset, in incerto haberetur* (*BJ* 46.8). The language aligns Nero with Jugurtha but simultaneously stresses his deterioration from that military paradigm. The adverbs *procul an coram* (paired only here) vary the familiar polar terms *absens / praesens*. **dehinc:** 23.4n. **quae natura magnis timoribus** is a condensed expression for *quod* (antecedent = *deterius ... euenerat*) *est natura magnis timoribus* (with ellipse of *est* and the relative attracted to the gender of *natura*). 'The relative with an abstract noun may be used parenthetically to characterise a person' or, here, a concept (A-G §309e). This 'anticipatory' generalisation allows T. to comment on human psychology, investing his narrative with timeless relevance: cf. *insita mortalibus natura* (*H.* 1.55.1, 2.20.1), *magnis semper conatibus aduersa* (15.50.4). The impact of fear particularly interests him: *quae natura trepidantium est* (*H.* 3.58.3), *quae natura pauporis est* (*H.* 3.84.4), *ut est ... pauidusque* (15.46.1). **deterius ... euenerat:** the pithy observation reworks T.'s comment about reactions after Placentia's amphitheatre burns down: *dum atrociora metuebantur, in leui habitum, reddita securitate, tamquam nihil grauius pati potuissent, maerebant* (*H.* 2.21.2). The periphrastic *quod euenerat* probably indicates the great fire (Woodman 1998: 171 n. 7).

37.1 Ipse: 23.3n. **quo fidem adquireret nihil usquam perinde laetum sibi** 'to acquire the credibility that nothing anywhere was equally delightful to him [as Rome]' (10.3n. *quo ... arcerent* on *quo* without a comparative for *ut*); sc. *esse*. T. criticises Nero's rationale before even relating his actions. The emperor's rhetoric about *amor patriae* (15.36.2) also seems insincere.

publicis locis: Suetonius likewise stresses the public, visible setting of Nero's banquets (*cenitabatque nonnumquam et in publico*, *N.* 27.2). **struere conuiuia totaque urbe quasi domo uti:** the historic infinitives, arranged chastically, envelop the city within the clauses. *struo* (*OLD* 5b, again, 15.55.3), lofty for setting out feasts, echoes Tantalus (*Sen. Thy.* 148) and Hannibal's feast at Capua (*Sil.* 11.277). Its association with constructing physical buildings (*OLD* 2) foreshadows the acquisitive appropriation of public space for the Golden House (*usus est patriae ruinis exstruxitque domum*, 15.42.1; *urbis quae domui supererant*, 15.43.1). **celeberrimae luxu fama epulae fuere** 'especially celebrated for luxury and notoriety was the banquet'. The superlative adjective (3× *H.*, 3× *A.*), implying many such dinners from which T. could choose, suggests habitual conduct in Neronian Rome. That impression is enhanced because (grammatically plural) *epulae* can designate either one banquet or several. The combination *celeberrimae* and *fama* feels pleonastic. Yet linguistic excess aptly conveys an excessive banquet. Cicero, Caesar, and Livy (after the first decade) avoid the colourful variant *luxus* for *luxuria*. '*luxus ...* is preferred by Lucan (5:1), Silius (13:0), and Statius (6:1), as well as by T. (54:12)' (WM 379). **quas ... referam:** 'This statement, with its combination of the noun *exemplum* and a first-person verb, is unique in the *Annals* and signals that the following description is digressive' (Woodman 1998: 171–2). Exemplarity is pervasive in Roman historiography (MW 162; Aubrion 1985: 237–46; Chaplin 2000) and important to T. (Woodman 1998: 86–103; Turpin 2008). Some figures self-consciously enact exemplarity (Otho, *H.* 2.47.2; Corbulo, 13.35.4; Arria, 16.34.2) or actively appeal to it (Vocula, *H.* 4.58.2; Tiberius, *A.* 3.6.3; Mamercus, *A.* 3.66.1; Tarsa, *A.* 4.50.3; Claudius, *A.* 11.24.7; Thrasea Paetus, *A.* 14.44.4). T. selectively imposes exemplarity on others (Ligurian woman, *H.* 2.13.2; the fratricidal eques, *H.* 3.51.2; the Vibii Sereni, *A.* 4.28.1; Epicharis, *A.* 15.57.2; Sulpicius Asper, *A.* 15.68.1; Cassius Asclepiodotus, *A.* 16.33.1). He pointedly 'advertises' *exempla* in the *H.*'s preface (1.3.1). **Tigellino:** Ofonius Tigellinus (*OCD*³, *PIR*² o 91; Mayor 1872: 158–61), originally Sicilian, but brought up in Caligula's sisters' households, was exiled (AD 39; charged with adultery) and withdrew to Greece (Dio 59.23.9). After Burrus' death, he became praetorian prefect with Faenius Rufus (AD 62), dominating the narrative (and Nero) from his first appearance (14.48.1). Instrumental in suppressing the Pisonian conspiracy, he accompanied Nero to Greece (Dio 62.12.3). Otho forced him to suicide (AD 69; *Plut. O.* 2). The literary tradition lambasts 'the man who made Nero worthy of death' (*Plut. G.* 17.3; cf. *Jos. BJ* 4.9.2), but he was loyal to the emperor. T. memorably depicts his hedonistic suicide while bathing at Sinuessa and enjoying 'sex and kisses' amidst his mistresses (*H.* 1.72.3). **ne ... prodigentia narranda sit:** *prodigentia* ('monstrous behaviour'), a remarkable word for a

remarkable scene, features again (6.14.1, Geminius; 13.1.3, Narcissus), but is unattested elsewhere in Latin. *T.'s stern pose (resisting multiple accounts of hedonistic parties, although cf. 14.15, another example) simultaneously preserves historiography's grandeur, titillates audiences, and invites readers to condemn Nero's general conduct from one instance. Cf. Suetonius, often generalising from a single occurrence (e.g. *quotiens*, *N.* 27.2; Power 2014a: 210). Appian is similarly selective when narrating the proscriptions (*BC* 4.16).

37.2 igitur 2.1n. in stagno Agrippae: Augustus' right-hand man, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (*OCDF*), deeply committed to improving Rome's water supply (*uelut perpetuus curator*, Front., *Aq.* 98.1), constructed a new aqueduct (*Virgo*; 19 BC) to supply Rome's first public baths, for which this pool (on the Campus Martius) was a reservoir (c.190 × 210 metres; Champlin 2003: 153). For Nero (his great-grandson) to misuse it thus is strikingly transgressive. **fabricatus est:** T. allows deponent (as here, 3×) and regular forms (4×) of this verb to co-exist. **ratem, cui superpositum conuiuium:** Dio 62.15.2 more prosaically describes planks on wine casks creating a central (static) platform where Nero and Tigellinus dined, reclining on purple rugs and soft cushions. The compound verb *superpono*, itself not unusual, appears in T. only here: when indicating building, it 'would normally suggest dry land' (Woodman 1998: 173), and so suggests the topos of hybriistic men disregarding natural boundaries (Nisbet and Hubbard 1978: 303). T. has *ratis* (*OLD* 1, 'raft') again only for Claudius' mock naval battle on the Fucine lake (2×, 12.56), an ambivalent spectacle. Yet this banquet plumbs new depths. **tractu: 10.1n. naues auro et ebore distinctae:** Roman authors often combine ivory and gold to symbolise (and criticise) luxury (Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 351–2; 1978: 292–3). T. pairs them here only. These vessels recall the Ptolemies' sumptuous golden barges *θαλαμηγοί* ('cabin-carriers', including Cleopatra's lavish ship, Plut. *Ant.* 28; Pelling 1988: 187–8), thus contributing to the passage's Egyptian color. **exoleti per aetates et scientiam libidinum componebantur:** what exactly *exoletus* (3× in A.) means is disputed, but it seems to designate a passive homosexual. The Augustan disclaimer Labienus describes *exoleti* as *ad longiorem patientiam impudicitiae idonei* (Sen. *Contr.* 10.4.1; one *exoletus* in Seneca the Younger is *omnia pati doctus*, *Dial.* 1.3.13). They were probably household slaves who had lived continuously in the same household: since the past participle *exoletus* means 'grown-up', then 'the likeliest hypothesis is that they were (*pueri*) *exoleti*, most probably grown-up *pueri delicati* – slave boys ... who continued in adulthood the sexual relations with their masters that had begun in childhood' (Butrica 2002: 12). The term (perhaps allowing wordplay with *oletum*, 'shit'), discordant with historiography's grandeur, reflects the spectacle's deviant nature. The arrangement of

the *exoleti* parodies carefully demarcated military parades (15.29.2); cf. *exoleti* organised *per nationes coloresque* (Sen. *Ep.* 95.24). There is wry humour in rowers chosen for sexual expertise, not maritime skills. **uolucres ... feras ... animalia maris:** cf. *uolucresque feraeque* | ... *animalia* (Lucan 3.223–4, describing Egyptian hieroglyphs). Polysyndeton in the tricolon adds to the sense of lavishness. Whether the creatures are decorative or part of the dinner (or both), the notion of exotic goods imported from distant (*OLD diuersus* 4) lands is a classic device to condemn deviant lifestyle. So Sallust describes lavish banquets for Metellus in Spain (*trans maria, ex Mauretania uolucrum et ferarum incognita antea plura genera*, *H.* 2.70 M; cf. *uescendi causa terra marique omnia exquirere*, *BC* 13.3). Enumerating animals by individual habitat (air, land, sea) underscores the global dimension as these creatures are unnaturally transported to the centre. The image of the city incorporating the world (*orbis / urbs*; Kraus 1994a: 252) is often positive, but not here. The grand periphrasis *animalia maris* is Plinian (Elder Pliny *HN* 6.176; Younger Pliny *Ep.* 6.20.9). **Oceano abusque,** 'a most unusual phrase' (Woodman 1998: 175), manifests anastrophe of preposition (standard with an attribute, but not in clauses without one). Before T. only Virgil uses it in this sense (*A.* 7.289, without anastrophe). Disrupting the 'natural' grammatical order aptly reflects these creatures' unnatural transplantation: cf. Lucretius illustrating the breaking of natural laws (men arising from the sea, fish from the earth, birds hatching in the sky, *DRN* 1.161–2). *Oceanus*, 'referring to the sea or great river which, according to ancient legend, encircled the world' (Woodman 1998: 175), underscores the global scale of the transgression.

37.3 crepidinibus is dative (with *adstant*). *crepido* (*OLD* c), only here in T., designates various kinds of raised structure or embankment, reminding us that this pool is man-made. **lupanaria:** this term ('brothels') is etymologically linked to *lupa* ('she-wolf'). After the list of imported creatures, it hints at the women behaving like animals (cf. Messalina's prostitute title, *Lycisca*, *Juv.* 6.123). It recurs in T. only during Nero's furtive, nocturnal wanderings around the city (13.25.1). Suetonius refers instead to *deuersoriae tabernae* (*N.* 27.3). **illustribus feminis completa, et contra scorta uisebantur:** in alliterative language, T. accentuates the visual and incorporates both ends of the social spectrum. Blurring boundaries between the highest and lowest classes is effective for stirring *indignatio*: cf. *scorta inter matres familias uersabantur* (Cic. *Phil.* 2.105). T. likes the combination *illustres feminae* (11×, A.), often in contexts emphasising debasement (cf. 15.32). The etymological link of *illustris* with *lux* is apt, given the emphasis on visibility (cf. Cic. *Leg.* 2.37 *ut mulierum famam multorum oculis lux clara custodiat*). Honour words in Latin often 'rely upon the shining metaphor' (Lendon 1997: 274), here pointedly

accentuating dishonour. There is perhaps also wordplay with *lustror* ('I haunt brothels'). Dio, likewise emphasising the women's social extremes, is more explicit about the sexual encounters (62.15.4). Suetonius highlights *matronae* imitating dancing-girls (*N.* 27.3). T. uses *scortum* selectively in contexts intended to provoke *indignatio* (*H.* 1.13.3, 3.83.2, *A.* 15.72.2). **nudis corporibus**: nudity 'indicates the lowest class of whore' (Courtney 1980: 276). Cf. Gyges' aphorism: 'Together with her clothes a woman casts off her shame' (Hdt. 1.8.3; Pelling 2006: 144–5). **iam gestus motusque obsceni**: 'already the gestures and movements were lewd' (sc. *erant*). T. has *obscenus* only here, but its derivation from *scaena* suggests theatricality (*obscenum dictum ab scaena*, Varro *LL* 7.96). Similarly at the banquet for Nero's *Iuuenalia* (AD 59) there were *gestus modosque haud uiriles* (14.15.1). **postquam tenebrae incedebant** 'as darkness was approaching'. *postquam* + imperfect tense (common only in the historians) gives 'a quasi-causal sense' and denotes 'contemporaneous rather than prior action' (*NLS* §217.5; *postquam urgebatur*, 15.67.1). *incedo* (*OLD* 6a), unusual for the onset of darkness (*TLL* s.v. *incedo* 857.1–3), recalls Columella (*nox*, *RR* 2.10.30; *crepusculum*, 11.1.18) and Silius Italicus (*incedere noctis* | ... *tenebras*, 8.337–8). Darkness and debauchery often cluster in Roman literature (cf. Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 122). **quantum iuxta nemoris** 'every nearby grove' (an apt setting 'if the women are seen in terms of animals', Woodman 1998: 176. Cf. Vitellius, *umbraculis hortorum abditus, ut ignava animalia*, *H.* 3.36.1). *quantum* + partitive genitive (G-L §369, *NLS* §77) conveys the activity's spatial extent. **circumiecta tecta consonare cantu et luminibus clarescere**: historic infinitives arranged chiasmically capture the noise and lights, assaulting our senses as alliteration (including an elegant 'echo' delivered through homoioteleuton; Woodman 2012: 18 n. 4) mirrors the noisy revelry. T. intensifies sound-effects used earlier for another dinner-party: *collucere per noctem crebris luminibus* (*H.* 3.38.1). The compound *consono* (once more in T.; 14.32.1) lends itself to resonant combinations: *consonante clamore* (Livy 36.34.5, using it only once). T. pollutes 'wholesome' epic noise in Virgil: *consonat omne nemus*, *A.* 5.149 (the crowd at the boat-race), *A.* 8.305 (Hercules killing Cacus).

37.4 per licita atque illicita: this polar expression (27.3n. *plana edita*), where both adjectives function as substantives, is unprecedented. The paradoxical notion of defilement through *permitted* acts is admissible because the oxymoronic doublet crisply captures the huge scale of Nero's transgressions. **nihil flagitii reliquerat**: Nero's unstinting pursuit of sexual novelty recalls Velleius, describing the debaucheries of Augustus' daughter, Julia (Nero's great-grandmother): *nihil... luxuria <ac> libidine infectum reliquit* (2.100.3). Working tirelessly to achieve goals is normally a positive topos, associated with ideal generals (Woodman 1983: 198; MW 85)

and industrious rulers (Xen. *Mem.* 2.212–34; cf. Pliny to Trajan: *initium laboris mirer an finem?*, Pliny *Pan.* 14.4). Yet Nero energetically pursues spectacularly inappropriate goals. **quo corruptior ageret** 'by which he could worsen his perverted lifestyle' (*OLD ago* 35b). **nisi**: T., brilliantly undermining an apparently unambiguous main clause, 'moves the goalposts' by an appended *nisi* clause (again, 15.50.4, 55.4; cf. Galba, *omnium consensu capax imperii, nisi imperasset*, *H.* 1.49.4). 'The wit of such language comes from a framing effect in statements subverted by larger, momentarily concealed contexts' (Plass 1988: 64). **paucos post dies**: that the 'marriage' postdates the party only accentuates the transgression. Rather than unfolding during chaotic merrymaking, it is carefully planned and executed. **uni ex illo contaminatorum grege**: T. evokes Horace's Cleopatra ode, specifically her entourage of eunuchs (*contaminato cum grege turpium* | *morbo uirorum*, *C.* 1.37.9–10; cf. Seneca *Ep.* 87.16 for Chelidon, *unus ex Cleopatrae mollibus*). If Pythagoras is cast as an Egyptian eunuch, Nero becomes Cleopatra, a foreign queen and infamous enemy of Rome. Thereby T. 'transforms' Rome into Alexandria (Woodman 1998: 181), reversing Augustus' seminal victory over the east. Damning association of emperors with Cleopatra recurs (e.g. Claudius' mistress, Cleopatra, 11.30.1). Juvenal's Otho trumps Cleopatra, who (unlike the emperor) avoided engaging in beauty treatment before battle (2.109). **(nomen Pythagorae fuit)**: the parenthetic detail, reinforcing the authenticity of an event which otherwise might seem incredible, distinguishes Pythagoras from Nero's other male bride, Sporus (Suet. *N.* 28.1–2; Dio 62.28.3, 63.13.1). The name accentuates Greekness, evoking the famous philosopher Pythagoras, perhaps ironically given his 'recommendation that one should refrain from sexual intercourse altogether' (Woodman 1998: 178). Suetonius calls him Doryphorus (*N.* 29). **in modum sollemnium coniugiorum** 'in the manner of a traditional marriage ceremony' (*OLD modus* 11c). With resonant homoioteleuton, the unprecedented combination *sollemnia coniugia* foregrounds the clash between the traditional ritual and transgressive wedding. Whereas Dido calls her love-affair a marriage (Virg. *A.* 4.172), Nero's *culpa* is the wedding ceremony itself. Likewise, Juvenal attacks Gracchus for marrying another man (2.117–48), while Martial mocks 'bearded Callistratus' for marrying brawny Afer (12.42; Vout 2007: 136–66). A mock-marriage between Pannychis and Giton (Petr. *Sat.* 25.7), perhaps modelled directly on Nero's wedding (Schmelgel 2011: 78), includes realistic touches (the bridal veil and wedding-torch). Lucan's 'anti-wedding' of Cato and Marcia could be reacting against it (2.354–71; Fantham 1992: 145). **denupsisset**: the rare compound *denubo* (first, Ovid *M.* 12.196; once more in T., 6.27.1, of Drusus' daughter Julia), for a woman marrying a man, suggests her leaving the parental home. T. perhaps uses it as a synonym for simple *nubo*

(Woodman 2017: 200), but reserves the shock for the sentence's end. Our sources distinguish between Nero playing the bride (Pythagoras / Doryphorus wedding) or groom (Sporus wedding): [sc. *Doryphorus*] *cui etiam, sicut ipsi Sporus, ita ipse denupsit* (N. 29). Dio calls Pythagoras Nero's 'husband' and Sporus his 'wife' (63.13.2). **inditum** ... **nuptiales: enumeratio** (19.2n.) injects *indignatio*, enhanced by ellipse, asyndeton, then polysyndeton (*et... et*) while pinpointing the wedding's formal accoutrements. Carefully adhering to normal rituals only sharpens the sense of violation. T. caustically calls Nero *imperator* just when least deserving that military title. **flammeum**: both the deviant Callistratus (Mart. 12.42.3) and Gracchus (Juv. 2.124) wear the flame-coloured wedding veil covering the bride's head but leaving the face exposed (Balsdon 1962: 183; Treggiari 1991: 163, 169). So does Juvenal's Messalina (10.334). Her wedding to Silius is a 'narrative dyad' for the current scene (von Stackelberg 2009: 613). **<ad>missi auspices** 'the officiating parties were admitted'. An *auspex* originally sought omens by observing the flight of birds (*OLD* 1), but the term later designated someone presiding over a wedding ceremony (*OLD* 2). 'The practice of employing diviners ... was succeeded by the use of friends of the family, to whom the same designation *auspex* was applied' (Wardle 2006: 177 on Cic. *Diu.* 1.28; cf. Val. Max. 2.1.1; Malloch 2013: 410). The original meaning hints that this perverted wedding presages disaster. Cf. the formal *auspicum uerba* at Messalina's and Silius' bigamous wedding (11.27; Juv. 10.333–6). **dos**: 'the strength of the Roman dotal system was its adaptability' (Treggiari 1991: 361, 323–64), but this dowry is clearly transgressive. Cf. Mart. 12.42.4, *dos etiam dicta est* (during another male–male 'marriage'). Gracchus gave a dowry of 400,000 HS (the property census for an *eques*) to his male cornet-player (Juv. 2.117–18). Normally, the bride's father paid it (as specified in the marriage contract signed by wedding guests; Balsdon 1962: 183, 186–9; Saller 1984: 197–8). **genialis torus**: *genialis* is the standard epithet for *torus* (the marriage-bed), 'an ornamental bed of the *gens* set in the public atrium' (Treggiari 1991: 168; Fantham 1992: 146; Hor. *Ep.* 1.1.87). Elsewhere it powerfully symbolised moral uprightness and conjugal fidelity. Valerius Maximus (6.1 *Praef.*), addressing the goddess *Pudicitia*, associates Livia's *sanctissimus genialis torus* with Juno's *puluinar*. It could also focalise moral censure: e.g. Juvenal 6.127–32 on Messalina (van den Berg 2008: 251–8). **faces nuptiales**: cf. Mart. 12.42.3, *praeluxere faces*. Such torches often feature 'as symbols of the whole wedding' (Treggiari 1991: 166), but here implicitly link this polluted marriage and the (imminent) fire in Rome. Compare the beacon-fire in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, signalling Agamemnon's capture of Troy (triggering a nexus of fire imagery; Gantz 1977) and Virgil's fire imagery in *A.* 4. **cuncta denique spectata**: Nero transforms the marriage's heart into a performative space. Cf.

Juvenal, denouncing the visibility of such 'weddings': *fient | fient ista palam* (2.135–6). T.'s periphrasis indicates the marriage's consummation, discreetly shrouding the sexual act which Nero makes public. Suetonius instead stresses noise, as Nero imitates *uoces ... et heulatus uim patientium uirginum* (N. 29). **quae etiam in femina nox operit** 'which night veils even in the case of a [real] woman' (*OLD in* 42). Roman marriages were consummated in darkness (Plut. *Mor.* 279F). T.'s language is Virgilian (*quotiens ... nox operit terras*, *A.* 4.351–2; Woodman 1998: 181–2). Introducing *femina* reminds us of Nero's wife Poppaea. T. described that wedding ceremony (AD 62) remarkably succinctly (*exim Poppaeae coniungitur*, 14.60.1).

38–41 Rome Burns

With the blazing torches of Nero's transgressive wedding fresh in our minds' eyes, T. now turns to the infamous fire in Rome (implying a causal connection: Waddell 2013: 486–8). Historiography relished disaster narratives, particularly the sacking of cities (*expugnationes urbium*, 4.32.1, MW 171; Troy is the archetype: Kraus 1994b; Woodman 2012: 387–92), reflected in the evolution of the *urbs capta* motif (Paul 1982; Purcell 1995). Yet this is Rome (and 'the most extensive disaster narrative in the extant *Annals*', Keitel 2010: 342; cf. Keitel 2009: 136–8). The city, always vulnerable to fires (Juv. 3.197–202), had burned before, most notably when the Gauls invaded (390 BC; Livy 5.39–55; the historian Claudius Quadrigarius started his work with the Gallic sack), but now there are no foreign enemies (even if T. hints at Nero as 'alien presence': Woodman 1992). Who is responsible? Other sources squarely blame Nero (Pliny *HN* 17.5, [Sen.] *Oct.* 831, Suet. *N.* 38, Dio 62.16.1): after all, he benefited, since the fire made space for his Golden House (a *cui bono* rationalisation; Cic. *Pro Roscio Amerino* 84, *Phil.* 2.35). Yet T. professes uncertainty (38.1n. *forte an dolo principis*), thereby displaying his even-handedness as a historian and adding conviction to his criticisms of Nero elsewhere (by not automatically blaming him; cf. Plut. *Mor.* 856D).

Urban fires were certainly endemic in the ancient world (18.2n. *fortuitus ignis*). There were huge conflagrations at Lugdunum (Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 91), Nicomedia (*uastissimum incendium*, Pliny *Ep.* 10.33), and Colonia Agrippinensis (13.57.3). Vitruvius even advises that in constructing a city, Vulcan's shrine should be located outside the walls so that buildings can be freed *a timore incendiorum* (1.7.1). Our fire (AD 64) could have been accidental, despite the notorious tradition that Nero sang about Troy's destruction while the city blazed (39.3n. *rumor*). Yet what matters is that contemporaries (and later writers) blamed Nero: 'To the eyes of spectators it was the capture of Rome' (Dio 62.18.1). His emergency measures to

aid the displaced populace did not save his reputation (39.3n. *popularia*), and his absence from Rome during the crisis (39.1 *non . . . regressus est*) only exacerbated hostility (cf. James, Duke of York, leading the fire-fighting during the great fire of London, September 1666: ‘The Duke of York hath won the hearts of the people with his continual and indefatigable pains day and night in helping to quench the Fire’, Tinniswood 2003: 80, quoting the letter of an eyewitness). Memories of the AD 64 fire endured: during Domitian’s principate, boundary markers specified preventative fire-clearance zones where building was forbidden (*CIL* 6.30387a, 30387b = *ILS* 4914, 30387c; Shaw 2015: 90).

Since historiography (including T.: *H.* 3.71, the burning of the Capitoline temple) and epic (Virgil *A.* 2) memorably narrate destructive urban fires, there was a risk that sophisticated readers’ interest might wane, however much intrinsic fascination such disasters had (cf. *urbs incendiis uastata*, *H.* 1.2.2, billed as an incentive to audiences). T. needed all his creative artistry to deliver a successful version of this fire – compelling but not too sensational or hackneyed. Hence ‘he does not lace his account with reminiscences from Livy’, nor does he ‘evoke the fall of Troy aside from Nero’s musical performance’ (Keitel 2010: 344; though cf. 38.6n. *patente effugio*). Other models were available to him, including accounts of Vesuvius’ eruption (AD 79; Pliny *Ep.* 6.16, 6.20), covered in the missing books of *H.* (38.4n. *lamenta . . . feminarum*; 38.5n. *respectant*; 39.1n. *haurirentur*), and the hyperbolic world of the declamation schools. So T. includes expressive links with Papirius Fabianus’ speech denouncing wealth as even having corrupted buildings: *tanta altitudo aedificiorum* [cf. 15.43.1, *aedificiorum altitudine*] *est tantaque uiarum angustiae* [cf. 15.38.3, *artis itineribus*] *ut neque aduersus ignem praesidium nec ex ruinis ullam in partem effugium* [cf. 15.38.6, *effugio*] *sit* (Sen. *Contr.* 2.1.11).

T. structures his version of the fire carefully. The opening section (*Sequitur . . . Roma fuit*, 15.38.1–3) presents its outbreak, examining in detail the city’s topography as a causal factor and personifying the fire as marauding army (38.3n. *impetu*; 38.5n. *circumueniebantur*); only in the second section (*ad hoc lamenta . . . iussu*, 15.38.4–7) does T. switch to the devastating human cost, focalising through the fire’s victims; the third section (15.39) then jumps to the absent Nero and rumours of his singing performance. Finally, the fire is now extinguished. Yet this is ‘false closure’ (40.1n. *rursum grassatus*) before a further outbreak devastates temples (15.41.1) and prompts people elaborately to compare the Gallic sack (15.41.2). In comparison Suetonius’ account (*N.* 38) is skeletal and paratactic, with virtually no focus on the victims and foregrounding instead Nero’s malice aforesaid. Dio’s ‘rhetorically exaggerated’ (Shaw 2015: 82) version (62.16–18) likewise blames Nero and devotes

almost the whole narrative to the distressed populace, only briefly summarising the damage to the city’s physical fabric. On the Neronian fire and responses to it, see Champlin 2003: 178–200, Shannon 2012, Shaw 2015, Closs 2016.

38.1 Sequitur clades: cf. *clade* (Suet. *N.* 38.2). Columella bathetically applies the phrase to sheep (*RR* 7.4.2). This tiny main clause (historic present), a direct and masterful opening, by implication causally links Nero’s transgressive marriage and the fire (which started on 19 July AD 64), establishing a ‘collision quick-cut . . . compelling the reader to forge narrative meaning’ (Waddell 2013: 484). Seneca’s suicide is introduced in similarly arresting language (*sequitur caedes*, 15.60.2). T. uses *clades* again for a fire (16.13.3), but its association with military disasters (14.33.2; cf. 15.46.2) introduces metaphorical language casting this fire as an invading army. Seneca calls the conflagration at Lugdunum even worse than (the consequences of) warfare (*Ep.* 91.2, *in tanta pace quantum ne bello quidem timeri potest accidit*). **forte an dolo principis:** other authors unambiguously assert Nero’s guilt (Pliny *HN* 17.5, [Sen.] *Oct.* 831, Suet. *N.* 38, Dio 62.16.1; cf. Jos. *AJ* 20.154–5 on bias in historians of Nero’s principate). T.’s *dubitatio* is artful: ‘the posed indecision has a rhetorical force characteristic of and crucial to Tacitus’ narrative’ (Whitton 2011: 274). Cf. Camillus’ speech after the Gallic sack (*si fraude si casu . . . incendium ortum sit*, Livy 5.54.1). **utrumque . . . prodidere:** T.’s assertive appeal to the sources assumes contemporary readers’ incredulity that potentially this fire was accidental. Under the Flavians a historical tradition developed which was largely hostile to Nero, although Cluvius Rufus (*FRHist* no. 84), who accompanied Nero to Greece, was perhaps more sympathetic. T. is sensitive to biased sources: cf. his *aporia* about who set fire to the Capitol (AD 69; *H.* 3.71.4), although all other accounts blame the Vitellians. **omnibus . . . grauior atque atrocior:** Rome suffered frequent fires, allowing inhabitants to assess latest outbreaks against earlier ones. One violent fire (AD 27) *urbem ultra solitum adfecit* (4.64.1; cf. *gravi igne* [AD 36], 6.45.1). Yet this fire surpasses them all, emphasised by hyperbaton of the comparative ablative *omnibus* and T.’s variant of a ‘superlative expression’ (involving *non alias* and a comparative adjective, ‘common in T.’, WM 137; similarly, 15.46.2, 47.1). Thucydides describes another ‘superlative fire’ at Plataea: ‘the largest man-made conflagration that anyone had ever seen up to that time’ (2.77.4). Insisting beforehand on an event’s severity is common in historical prefaces (*bellum . . . magnum et atrox uariaque uictoria*, Sall. *BJ* 5.1; cf. Thuc. 1.1.1) or prefatory sections within historical narratives (*bellum maxime omnium memorabile quae unquam gesta sint*, Livy 21.1.1). The benchmark was the fire triggered when the Gauls sacked Rome (390 BC). Seneca signals one unprecedented fire at Lugdunum: *inopinatum*

malum et paene inauditum (Ep. 9.1.1). **per uiolentiam ignium**: only now T. reveals that the *clades* is a fire. We find similar arresting language in a declamation (*domus ignium saepta uiolentia*, [Quint.] *Decl. Mai.* 2.2; cf. *flammarum uiolentia*, Sen. Ep. 9.1.12). Varro proposes the (false) etymology of Vulcan named *ab ignis ... ui ac uiolentia* (LL 5.70).

38.2 initium ... ortum: sc. *est*. This pleonasm, favoured in the *H.*, then diminishes (G-G 641; Ash 2007: 263; Lausberg §502). **in ea parte circi**: i.e. the Circus Maximus' south-east corner towards the Porta Capena. The Circus (OCD³; Richardson 1992: 84–7) was monumentally rebuilt under Trajan (Pliny *Pan.* 5.1, Suet. *Dom.* 5, Dio 68.7). Such topographical precision distinguishes T.'s narrative from versions in Suetonius and Dio: this terrible fire originates in part of the city associated above all with leisure and entertainment (and Nero). **quae ... contigua** reprises language from an earlier fire-narrative (*parte circi quae Auentino contigua*, 6.45.1). **tabernas**: the Circus had an outside portico with shops and dwellings above (Dion. Hal. 3.68.4). A *taberna* comprised 'a rectilinear room, situated on the ground floor, with a wide entrance in direct communication with the street' (Holleran 2012: 100). **id mercimonium inerat quo flamma alitur**: *mercimonium* (collective singular), previously found only in Plautus (TLL s.v. *mercimonium* 798.42–53), is an archaic alternative for *merx*. The whole phrase is a circumlocution typically liked by T. (Syme 1958: 343; 54.3n. *uulneribus ... sanguis*), here personifying the fire as hungry predator (cf. *cuncta depascitur*, Sen. Ep. 9.1.1). *tabernae* were vulnerable to fires because of stored merchandise (cf. Livy 26.27.3, 27.11.16) and the many businesses using fire (e.g. bakeries, potters, glassmakers, metalworkers, food shops smoking cheese; cf. Martial's smoke-blackened *nigra popina*, 7.61.8). Merchants also displayed goods in the streets outside the *tabernae*. Domitian's edict prohibited shopkeepers from doing so beyond their immediate thresholds (Mart. 7.61; Vioque 2002: 356–9). **simul coeptus ignis et statim ualidus ac uento citus** 'the fire, instantly strong the moment it started, and driven by the wind' (1.1n. *ualidae*). Alliteration (*coeptus ... citus*) envelops further alliteration (*ualidus ac uento*) in a clause manifesting *uariatio* internally (*coeptus / ualidus / citus*; participle, adjective, participle) and beyond (*initium / ortum / coeptus*). *simul + et* (OLD *simul* 8) emphasises synchronicity (the fire's simultaneous inception and strength) and speed (likewise, *incepta simul audita et coercita*, *H.* 1.89.2). Participial *citus* for *impulsus* is Lucretian (1.997, the universe's incessant motion; *uento* and *corripio* [below] recall Virgil *A.* 9.536–7, another fire-description, Woodman 2012: 391). **longitudinem circi corripuit**: polysyllabic *longitudinem* (preceding further alliteration) mirrors the concept described. Echoes of Virgil describing chariot-races (*campum | corripuere ... currus*, *G.* 3.103–4; *A.* 5.144–5) elegantly align the fire with the speedy chariots

normally hurtling through the circus. **domus munimentis saeptae**: self-contained walled mansions were more likely to halt the fire than closely packed blocks of flats (dominant in the city's noisy entertainment district). Even mansions were not foolproof, as Lucretian echoes suggest: the devastating thunderbolt easily *transit enim ualidum fulmen per saepta domorum* (DRN 6.228, cf. 6.859; T. has already called our fire *ualidus*) and *per loca saepta | insinuarit* (DRN 6.88–9 = 6.384–5). Elsewhere T. contrasts interconnected buildings (typically Roman) and German homes surrounded with open areas, perhaps as protection *aduersus casus ignis* (*G.* 16.1). **uel ... aut**: *uel* is subordinate to *aut* (itself equivalent to *neque*, OLD *aut* 5), closely pairing the houses and temples as one unit. **quid aliud morae** 'any other impediment' (OLD *quis*² 2a; OLD *mora* 8, here partitive genitive). Ending lists climactically with *alius* + a capacious general term is a useful rhetorical technique (WK 155; TLL s.v. *alius* 1625.23–74). **interiacebat**: the compound is first attested in Livy (Oakley 1998: 293).

38.3 impetu: this ablative of manner (without the expected *cum* or adjective) reflects the lexical register of military action. **peruagatum**: sc. *est*. This resonant compound (21× Cicero; 8× Livy, often in military contexts), opening an alliterative sequence, features only in *A.* (also 12.36.1, modifying *fama*). Seneca uses it for fire (*incendio peruagante*, *NQ* 2.14.2) and Pliny for Christianity (*uicos ... superstitionis istius contagio peruagata est*, Ep. 10.96.9). **plana primum, deinde in edita adsurgens ... populando**: 27.3n. *plana edita*; 8.2n. *percursando*. Adverbs (*primum / deinde / rursus*) methodically accentuate the fire's relentless progress (including *uariatio* of participle and gerund). T. again evokes Virgil describing sinking and rising chariots (*iamque humiles iamque elati ... | ... adsurgere in auris*, *G.* 3.108–9, recalling Hom. *Il.* 23.368–9). **antiit remedia**: through medical metaphor, the fire is a 'fast-spreading epidemic' (WK 86; cf. Woodman 2010), while *anteo* sustains the sense of constant physical movement. Fire and disease combined broadly recalls Lucretius on the blazing fevers of the Athenian plague (DRN 6.1163–81): conversely, 'burning' words often 'describe either the disease itself or the diseased part' (WM 391). **obnoxia urbe** 'since the city was vulnerable' (OLD *obnoxius* 4; causal ablative absolute). Suetonius similarly has *urbem ... incendiis ... obnoxiam* (*Aug.* 28.3). 'A city of a million inhabitants, most of whom lived in high-density accommodation consisting of buildings with a high proportion of wooden elements was highly susceptible to fires' (Wardle 2014: 221). **artis itineribus hucque et illuc flexis**: likewise Daedalus' labyrinth *lumina flexu | ducit in errorem uariarum ambage uiarum* (*Ov. Met.* 8.160–1; cf. *labyrintheis e flexibus*, *Cat.* 64.114). Suetonius mentions *angustiis flexurisque uicorum* (*N.* 38.1). Narrow streets make other cities vulnerable to fire: *tantaque uiarum angustiae* (Sen. *Contr.* 2.1.11). Nero confronts this when rebuilding Rome

(15.43.1, *latis uiarum spatiis*). **enormibus uicis** 'because of its irregular blocks' (*OLD uicus* 2; causal ablative). Rome's unsystematic layout reflects hasty reconstruction after the Gallic sack (390 BC; Livy 5.55.4). Perhaps the compound adjective *enormis* (2× Agr., 2× A.; first attested in the younger Sen., elder Pliny) suggests the (absence of the) *norma*, the architects' measuring square (WK 136). **qualis uetus Roma fuit**: 'old Rome' means the city before the fire in AD 64 (most of T.'s contemporaries only knew the reconstructed version). Yet context and language suggest the more distant past, the *renata urbs* (Livy 6.1.3) after the Gallic sack. There are also epic resonances (cf. Virgil's *urbs antiqua*, A. 1.12, 2.363, 11.540).

38.4 ad hoc lamenta pauentium feminarum, fessa aetate aut rudis pueritiae [aetas] 'In addition the laments of frightened women, [those] worn out by age or in inexperienced youth'; 4.2n. *ad hoc*. The periphrasis for old and young adds poignancy. T. likes *fessa aetas* (Goodyear 1972: 305), evoking Virgil's Anchises: *fessum aetate parentem* (A. 2.596; cf. Vitellius' elderly mother Sextilia, *fessa aetate parens*, H. 3.67.1). *rudis pueritiae* (unattested elsewhere) varies the more familiar expression *pueri rudes*. Yet the text is difficult. After *feminarum* we apparently have *uariatio* (brachylogical ablative of quality + genitive of quality; Goodyear 1972: 283-6 on the latter). M's gemination (*aetate* ... *aetas*) prompted Jacob Gronovius to excise *aetas* (Heubner 1967 agrees). Although the two different constructions after *feminarum* seem extreme even for T. (perhaps a word has dropped out), impressionistic syntax enhances the sense of chaos. Laments were standard in descriptions of sacking cities (Oakley 1997: 416; WK 281), but Rome is not facing a foreign enemy. T. associates *lamentum* particularly with women (Agr. 29.1; 46.1; 4.51.2; 16.13.2). Dio's fire-narrative has wailing children, women, men, and the elderly (62.16.5). Pliny after Vesuvius' eruption describes *ululatus feminarum* (Ep. 6.20.14). **quique ... aliis**: anaphora and polar contrast (*sibi* / *aliis*) contrasts selfish and altruistic people. Dio anchors the concept to property (looters vs people rescuing belongings, 62.16.6). **dum ... opperiantur**: the clause applies only to the altruistic (*aliis*). *inualidi* poignantly succumb to the fire which was *statim ualidus* (15.38.2). **pars mora, pars festinans**: *uariatio* (instrumental ablative and participle; cf. 15.36.4, *cupidine et ... metuenti*) creates inconcinnity, accentuated by asyndeton and anaphora. **cuncta impediabant**: *cuncta* is probably accusative (or possibly a 'summarising' nominative of all the dangers, with the verb used absolutely).

38.5 in tergum respectant: *respecto* (designating repeated action; 3× in T.), the intensified form of *respicio*, is pleonastic with *in tergum*, accentuating the backwards look (similarly Pliny during Vesuvius' eruption: *respicio*, Ep. 6.20.13). **lateribus aut fronte circumueniebantur**: sc. *igni*. The fire's outflanking manoeuvre evokes standard military descriptions (e.g. *ab lateribus*

... *circumuenire*, Caes. BG 2.8.5; *a fronte atque ab utroque latere*, Caes. BC 1.25.10; *disiectos ab tergo aut lateribus circumueniebant*, Sall. BJ 50.6; cf. *ignium iactu circumueniretur*, A. 15.11.1), again aligning it with an army. The resonant polysyllabic verb (imperfect indicative tense: 8× in Latin, including 4× in T.) grimly encapsulates 'slow-motion' death. **si in proxima euaserant** 'whenever they escaped into the neighbouring districts' (30.1n. *aduerterat*). Cf. Dio: 'Even if anybody did save himself from immediate danger, he would run into another danger and die' (62.16.7). **igni correptis**: cf. *ignis* ... *corripuit* above (15.38.2). Repetition emphasises the fire's tenacity. **etiam quae longinqua crediderant**: this object-clause of *reperiebant* stands in opposition to *proxima* (above). The fire moves centrifugally, threatening even terrain considered distant (and therefore safe). **reperiebant**: sc. *ea*.

38.6 quid uitarent, quid peterent ambigui: T. evokes Livy (*incerto ... quid aut peterent aut uitarent*, 28.36.13). Anaphora, asyndeton, and polar verbs vividly capture the inhabitants' confusion. The adjective *ambiguus*, 'wavering' (*OLD* 2), can introduce indirect questions (*TLL* s.v. 1844.21-7). **complere uias, sterni per agros** 'they crowded the streets, flung themselves down over the open spaces' (historic infinitives in asyndeton). The verb *sterni* (passive used in a middle sense; *OLD* 5) often describes corpses after battles (*OLD* 7), thus sustaining the military register. In Suetonius, while the fire blazed, people cowered in monuments and tombs (N. 38.2). Some (e.g. Augustus' mausoleum) were surrounded by gardens, but *agri*, discordant in this urban milieu, recalls (with *uiae*) Lucretius' devastating plague (*funestos reddidit agros* | *uastauitque uias*, DRN 6.1139-40), when country-dwellers flood into the city (*omnia complebant loca tectaque*, DRN 6.1262) and collapse (*multaque per populi passim loca prompta uiasque* | ... *uideres*, DRN 6.1267-8). **amissis omnibus fortunis** 'after losing all their property' (*OLD fortuna* 12). **diurni quoque uictus** 'even <the chance> of their daily food' (*OLD quoque* 4a). This elliptical syllepsis is generated by *fortunis* from the previous clause: we still understand *fortunis* but now meaning 'chances, opportunities' (*OLD fortuna* 6). *uictus* (linked to *uiuo* 'I live') is etymologically expressive in a sentence culminating in death (likewise, *diurnum uictum*, Suet. N. 36.2). The acute shortage of food is shocking so soon after Tigellinus' lavish banquet. **caritate suorum** 'through affection for their relatives' (causal ablative; objective genitive). **eripere**: cf. (Hector's ghost to Aeneas) '*teque his ... eripe flammis*' (Virg. A. 2.289). **quamuis patente effugio interiere**: this Livian language (*effugium patuit*, 9.31.16; similarly 24.26.12, 29.33.5, 30.32.3) appealed to Seneca (Ag. 590-1), Silius Italicus (5.96), and T. (*patuisse effugium*, H. 3.59.3). Paradoxically preferring death over available escape recalls Anchises refusing to leave burning Troy (Virg. A. 2.634-49). Anchises relents, but these

people will die in Rome. Elsewhere, *effugium* euphemistically describes death itself (cf. *effugium non nisi mortē inueniret*, 6.49.1). The verb is resonant and rhythmical (*intēri|ērē*: a hexameter's fifth and sixth feet – another Livian echo; Kraus 1994a: 86 on 6.1.2).

38.7 nec quisquam ... iussu: in this classic 'appendix' sentence, the simple main verb is dwarfed by complex subordination: (i) an ablative absolute used causally (*crebris ... minis*), (ii) a *quia* clause (including *oratio obliqua*), and (iii) a disjunctive *siue* clause, itself marked by internal *uariatio* (*ut* introducing a purpose clause, then a causal ablative). **defendere:** itself unremarkable, the verb suggests defenders in a besieged city. **crebris multorum minis ... prohibentium:** interlaced word-order (synchysis of a double pair [*crebris + minis; multorum + prohibentium*] in the pattern 'abAB'; Wilkinson 1963: 213–20) accentuates the disorientating scene. **palam:** whereas T.'s fire-starters are anonymous, Suetonius blames Nero alone: *incendit urbem tam palam* (N. 38.1). **esse sibi auctorem** 'they had authorisation' (*OLD auctor* 3). The fire-starters avoid naming Nero, but the agent-noun implies his involvement. **uociferabantur:** elsewhere T. reserves this supremely Livian verb (54×; Oakley 1997: 519) exclusively for mutinous soldiers in high-octane settings (*H.* 3.14, 4.25.4). **siue ut raptus ... seu iussu:** Plautus (*Amph.* 110) has *ut* (for *quo*) + the comparative in a purpose clause (only here in T.; L-H-S 642 §348); cf. *quo* (for *ut*) without a comparative (10.3n. *quo ... arcerent*). The fairly common disjunctive pair *siue ~ seu* (with *uariatio*) has precedents in Caesar and Livy (Oakley 1998: 193; K-S §220.4, p.435). T. avoids deciding between his two alternative explanations of the fire-starters' claim, although the periphrasis *raptus exercere* (unattested elsewhere) for *praedari (uel sim.)* accentuates the first motive (cohering with T.'s general view of human weakness for looting, *H.* 2.7.2). Dio presents the soldiers setting new fires to facilitate their looting as simple fact (62.17.1).

39.1 Eo in tempore: 1.2n. *tot per annos*. **Antii:** 23.1n. **non ... regressus est:** Nero proclaimed devotion to the Roman people (15.36), but hypocritically only returns when fire threatens his own property. Other emperors did better. Claudius stayed in Rome to suppress a serious conflagration in the Aemiliana, a poor residential district (Suet. *Cl.* 18.1). Titus, though absent from Rome during a serious fire (AD 80), was (commendably) relieving Campania after Vesuvius' eruption (Dio 66.24). **domui ... continuauerat:** *OLD continuo* 1, 'join together' (9.2n.). In Suetonius the *Domus Transitoria* (extending a *Palatio Esquilias usque*) illustrates Nero's profligate building-practices (N. 31.1). Destroyed in this fire, it was the forerunner to the Golden House. The 'Passageway Palace' linked the imperial residences on the Palatine with Maecenas' gardens on the Esquiline, seeking to 'incorporate rural and urban elements in an integrated complex of

exceptional luxury and artificiality' (Patterson 1992: 206). **propinquaret:** if people are the subject, T. usually prefers simple *propinquo* over the compound *appropinquo* (14: 3 in his extant works), diverging from normal prose usage. This further personifies the fire. **neque tamen sisti potuit:** sc. *ignis* (*OLD sisto* 6 'bring to a standstill'). T. likes such phrasing (2× *H.*, 3× *A.*) for unstoppable (including Nero's: *nec iam sisti poterat*, 14.14.2). Combinations of *non / neque + sisti + posse* appear first in Plautus (*Trinummus* 720), then Livy, Silius, Curtius Rufus, and the Younger Pliny (*Pan.* 10.96.9, for Christianity; cf. 38.3n. *peruagatum*). *sisto*, common for staunching bleeding (WM 382; 15.54.3 *sistitur sanguis*), introduces a medical metaphor. **et Palatium ... haurirentur:** *Palatium* and *domus* are repeated from the previous sentence (arranged chiasmatically). Polysyndeton in the tricolon builds towards an alliterative and generalising climax (*cuncta circum*) encompassing the extended devastation. *haurio* 'is quite commonly used of fire (e.g. 12.58.2, *H.* 4.60.3, Petr. 98.9, Val. Fl. 7.97: *TLL* 6.3.2571.6–11)' (WM 479) and other disasters (*H.* 1.2.2, *haustae ... urbes*, after Vesuvius' eruption).

39.2 solacium populo exturbato ac profugo: sc. *domibus*. The accusative *solacium* (in apposition to the subsequent three locations) evokes a commonplace of consolatory literature – bereaved people could draw comfort from places and buildings (WM 223). Yet here urban space substitutes for the emperor who should be comforting his people. Enveloping alliteration (*populo exturbato profugo*) highlights an emotive phrase, associating the Roman populace with their Trojan forebears (*Troiani ... profugi*, Sall. *BC* 6.1) and Aeneas (*profugus*, Virg. *A.* 1.2). Instances of *exturbo* (1× *H.*; 9× *A.*) escalate in *A.* 11–16 (7×), often in military contexts. **monumenta Agrippae:** Nero again appropriates his great-grandfather's buildings for unexpected purposes (37.2n. *Agrippae*). Agrippa's projects in *Regio IX* included Vipsania's colonnade (*H.* 1.31.2; Damon 2003: 162), Agrippa's baths (Martial 3.20.15), the Pantheon (Pliny *HN* 36.38), and his own tomb (Dio 54.28.5). Only T. collectively calls them *monumenta* (cf. *Agrippae campus*, Gell. 14.5.1), pointedly evoking the commemorative power of buildings for their sponsor. **hortos quin etiam suos** 'and furthermore, even his own gardens' (*OLD quin* 3a). The list ends climactically with anastrophe conjunctions *quin etiam* (11× in T., including 2× in *A.*; cf. 18.2n. *quin et*), found 'in verse and post-Augustan prose' (WK 224; including Virgil *A.* 2.768, Woodman 2012: 390). Hyperbaton emphasises the possessive adjective *suos*. Agrippina the Elder had originally owned these extensive gardens below the Vatican hill (where Nero had raced chariots, 14.14). A portico and tree-lined promenade separated them from the Tiber (Richardson 1992: 196). **subitaria aedificia** 'makeshift constructions' (*OLD subitarius* 2b). This is a lofty, unprecedented phrase to

describe temporary structures. T. often avoids everyday or technical language in ostentatious ways. **exstruxit**: in A. 11–16 T. increasingly prefers compound *exstruo* (12×) over *struo* (3×) to indicate building, reversing the pattern of A. 1–6 (*exstruo* 12×, *struo* 5×; Adams 1972: 363–4). **multitudinem inopem**: this rare (again only Apul. *Plat.* 2.28) emotive combination for the destitute (*OLD inops* 1) multitude has class resonances, suggesting the urban poor. **utensilia** ‘provisions’ (*OLD utensilis* b; in Varro, Livy, and Columella, then Pliny the Elder; 5× in T., all in A.) are ‘consumables, food in particular, as well as durables’ (Goodyear 1981: 132). Pliny celebrates Ostia’s general ability to supply such items (*Ep.* 2.17.26). **usque ad ternos nummos** ‘to three sesterces’ (18.2n. *pretio*). Adding *usque* (*OLD* 6b, for numerical measurements) to *ad* (cf. *usque ad dena sestertia*, 11.7.4) suggests a genuinely impressive reduction.

39.3 quae quamquam popularia ‘these measures although inviting public approval’. The connecting relative *quae* summarises all the emergency interventions listed previously. *popularis* (*OLD* 5) implies intent, not result: Nero courted the people, but unsuccessfully. **in irritum cadebant**: T. uses this Livian combination (*ad irritum cadentis spei*, 2.6.1) 3× for thwarted efforts (also *H.* 3.53.3, *A.* 15.51.2). The adjective *irritus* (here used substantivally and incorporated into an adverbial prepositional phrase) often modifies e.g. *labor*, *testamentum*, *inceptum*: T. has it 13× (more than any other extant author). **peruaserat rumor** reprises exclusively Livian phrasing (5.18.10, 24.31.2). What Suetonius (*N.* 38.2) and Dio (62.18.1) present as fact, T. calls rumour (a crucial distinction for projecting himself as an unbiased historian). *peruaserat* (elsewhere usually with people as subject) replicates T.’s earlier figurative usage (*peruaserat* ... *fama*, 1.69.1). The pluperfect tense anchors the gossip before the emergency measures, suggesting its speedy dissemination. **flagrantis urbis**: 22.2n. *conflagrauit. inisse eum domesticam scaenam*: this indirect statement depends on *rumor*. Other sources specify conspicuously lofty locations, either the Tower of Maecenas (Suet. *N.* 38.2: cf. Hor. *C.* 3.29.10, *molem propinquam nubibus arduis*; Richardson 1992: 403) or the Palace’s roof (Dio 62.18.1). They also describe Nero’s stage-clothing (omitted by T.): *in illo suo scaenico habitu* (Suet. *N.* 38.2), τὴν σκευὴν τὴν κιθαρωδικτὴν (Dio 62.18.1). **cecinnisse Troianum excidium**: T. latinises the Greek title *Halosis Ilii* (Suetonius) / Ἁλωσις Ἰλίου (Dio), changing ‘Capture’ to ‘Destruction’ (cf. the lost *Iliupersis* from the epic cycle). Nero probably composed this piece himself (whether or not he performed it now). His creative literary range was broad, ‘running from mordant satire to hymns to a proposed epic on Roman history, and almost certainly included the appropriate monologues, arias, and libretti for his performances on stage’ (Champlin 2003: 82; cf. Baldwin 2005). Yet although T. accentuates Nero’s performances (whether

lyre-playing, acting tragedies or dancing pantomimes), he imposes a kind of *damnatio memoriae* on his writings (Courtney 1993: 357–9, Blänsdorf 2011: 323–8 list *testimonia* and fragments). Suetonius apparently saw Nero’s notebooks, including annotated poetry in his own handwriting indicating his authorship (*N.* 52). The sack of Troy inspired other artists, notably Polygnotos and his monumental painting *Iliupersis* at Delphi (Pausanias 10.25–7) and Petronius’ Eumolpus spontaneously delivering a (bad) *Troiae Halosis* in iambic trimeters while viewing a painting of Troy’s sack (*Sat.* 89; Schmeling 2011: 369–76). Lucan subsequently writes *De incendio urbis* about this very fire (Woodman 2012: 392). Cf. 70.1n. *mortis imaginem. praesentia mala uetustis cladibus assimulan-tem*: ring-composition sees Nero comparing (*OLD assimilo* 7 + dative) the fire to ancient disasters, but for T. the fire itself is a *clades* (15.38.1). *uetusta clades* is first attested in Cicero’s translation of Aeschylus’ lost play about Prometheus giving stolen fire to mankind (*Tusc.* 2.25 = fr. 33.25–6, with Blänsdorf 2011: 173; again only at Lucan 8.416). ‘Comparing latter-day disasters with the sack of Troy is something Romans other than Nero also do, not least of all Livy’ (Kraus 1994b; Hardie 2012: 307; T. hints that the sacks of Cremona [*H.* 3.33–4] and the Capitoline temple of Jupiter [*H.* 3.72] repeat the sack of Troy). Ovid is conspicuously diffident about such comparisons: *si licet exemplis in paruo grandibus uti | haec facies Troiae, cum caperetur, erat* (*Tr.* 1.3.25–6).

40.1 Sexto demum die: cf. Suetonius’ *per sex dies septemque noctes* (*N.* 38.2). A Domitianic inscription from a monumental altar to Vulcan (vowed by Nero and fulfilled by Domitian) presents the blaze lasting for nine days (*per nouem dies*, *CIL* VI.1 826.10; Closs 2016). T. knows this (cf. *rursum grassatus ignis* below), but exploits false closure. Livy likes *demum* ‘sandwiched’ in time phrases to mark long-awaited outcomes (5× *anno*; 1× *die*; 2× *hora*), reserved in T. for emotive settings (*postera demum die*, *H.* 1.49.1). **apud imas Esquilias**: the Esquiline hill accommodated sumptuous estates and gardens, but the lower slopes were crowded with more commonplace housing (Gowers 1995: 31; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.8–13). **prorutis per immensum aedificiis** ‘by the widespread demolition of buildings’. T. again evokes a military campaign. The drastic measure recalls ‘scorched earth’ policy during wars, when buildings and food were burned to deprive the enemy of resources: e.g. after the Roman defeat at Trasimene (217 BC; Livy 22.11.4). **continuae uiolentiae** ‘relentless violence’ (sc. *incendii*). **uelut uacuum caelum**: *uelut* softens the hyperbole of ‘unoccupied sky’ (i.e. Rome’s conspicuously absent high-rise buildings). ‘The Romans felt metaphorical usages of their language more strongly than we do in ours, and commonly qualified any novel departure’ (Mayer 2001: 102 on *uelut*). Epic phrasing (Virg. *A.* 5.515, *Sil.* 9.303, *Stat. Th.* 3.459) suggests the

firmament's expansive vista (Manil. *Astr.* 1.472). **necdum pos<i>t<us> metus** 'However, before fear had been laid aside' (sc. *erat*). *necdum* is probably the normal conjunction (*OLD nequedum* 1), not an adverb functioning as *nondum* and modifying *pos<i>t<us>*. This simple for compound form (29.1n. *ponere*) is Jacob's emendation (1875) of M's *post metus*. **aut redierat <p>lebi <s>pes**: M's text reads *aut rediebat lebis*, emended by Madvig (1871). **rursum grassatus**: sc. *est*. The archaising adverb (25.2n. *rursum*) abruptly unmasks the false closure. Elsewhere *grassor* ('run riot' *OLD* 4) often describes diseases or roaming robbers hunting down victims (*OLD* 2). **ignis, patulis magis urbis locis**: the striking homoioteleuton perhaps mimics the fire's methodical progress. The adjective *patulus* (liked by poets from Lucretius onwards) recurs once in T. (15.43.5). **strages hominum**: Livy particularly favours *strages* (56x; Oakley 1998: 223–4), associated with high poetry (and battlefields, *OLD* 2). T. has it 16x (including natural disasters, *H.* 1.86.2, *A.* 1.76.1, 4.62.3). **delubra ... dicatae**: the clause manifests enveloping alliteration. Resonant *delubra deum*, a pithier alternative to *delubra deorum* (*H.* 3.82.1; preferred by Cic., Sall., Hor.) appears in Lucretius (6x) and Livy (8x). Virgil uses it emotively (*A.* 2.248). Glossing porticoes as 'dedicated as an attraction' introduces the idea of the *locus amoenus* just when the context least suits it. *dico*¹ often has religious resonances (*OLD* 2, 3), perhaps hinting that the inhabitants have their priorities wrong. Porticoes could symbolise sharp decline (Vell. 2.1.2) or a debilitating influence (*Agr.* 21.2; WK 204–5). **latius procidere** 'collapsed more extensively'. *procidere* is probably an alternative third-person plural perfect (not a historic infinitive).

40.2 plusque infamiae: T. typically triggers curiosity by shifting the moralising parameters: imagining something more infamous than Nero's rumoured performance is challenging, but T. will deliver. **praediis Tigellini Aemilianis**: ablative of origin; 37.1n. *Tigellino*. The exact location of the *Aemiliana*, a poor residential district (Varro *RR* 3.2), is contested but it lay in the southern Campus Martius near the *diribitorium*, where ballots were counted (Richardson 1992: 3). Fires started there in AD 38 (Smallwood 1984: no. 31) and AD 52 (Suet. *Cl.* 18.1; Hurley 2001: 139–40). **uidebaturque**: T., carefully recreating the contemporary reaction in AD 64, resists endorsing or denying this story. **condendae urbis nouae**: figuratively 'refounding' cities could be positive: 'The Greeks used to call a benefactor or a saviour a new κτιστής of their city' (Weinstock 1971: 177). Yet Nero shockingly imagines building a brand new city on Rome's existing site. Despite the 'recurrent pattern of a city destroyed before a city can be securely founded: Troy before Lavinium, Alba Longa before Rome' (Kraus 1994b: 270), Nero destroys and founds the same city. Although Livy after the Gallic sack celebrates the *urbs renata* (6.1.3, with Camillus as

second *conditor*, 5.49.7, 7.1.10), foreign invaders imposed that necessity. Marius was hailed as the city's 'third founder' after defeating the Cimbri (Plut. *Mar.* 27.9; Oakley 1998: 37), while Cicero celebrated Rome being 'reborn' in his consulship (Oakley 1997: 386). **cognomento suo**: T. withholds the Greek name, Neropolis (Suet. *N.* 55, adding that the month April became *Neroneus*; 74.1n.). Others gave their names to new cities (e.g. Sextius and Aquae Sextiae, Livy *Per.* 61) or exploited names for other reasons (e.g. Alexander and Bucephala, celebrating his horse Bucephalus, Curt. 9.3.23; Augustus' Nicopolis, celebrating Actium, Suet. *Aug.* 18.2, Wardle 2014: 159). Renaming existing cities along such lines was more controversial. Even Alexandria (*appellationem trahens ex nomine auctoris*, Curt. 4.8.2) was an entirely new foundation (though it inspired Nero when reconstructing Rome: 43.1n. *dimensis ... protegerent*). **gloriam quaerere**: what Nero perceives as 'glory' T. casts as *hybris*. The focalisation captures the emperor's idiosyncratic worldview. Cf. Tiberius winning genuine *gloria* for intervening after a fire (6.45.1). **quippe**: 1.2n. **in regiones quattuordecim ... diuiditur**: some editors think this is a gloss, but it could link the fire with a portent following Agrippina's murder (AD 59; *tactae de caelo quattuordecim urbis regiones*, 14.12.2) and (in language evoking the opening of Caesar's *BG*) reflect T.'s confidence about his work's longevity: the point may be obvious to contemporaries, but not necessarily to later readers. Augustus divided Rome into fourteen districts (7 BC; Suet. *Aug.* 30.1, Dio 55.8.7) subdivided into 307 *uici* administered by special *uicomagistri* (Richardson 1992: 329, 331–2; Holleran 2012, including a map; Wardle 2014: 239–40). **quattuor integrae**: these districts (furthest from the fire) were almost certainly XIV *Transiberina*, possibly also VI *Alta Semita* and VII *Via Lata* to the north, and V *Esquiliae* to the east (Richardson 1992: 332). **tres ... deiectae**: probably XI *Circus Maximus*, X *Palatium*, and IV *Templum Pacis* (Richardson 1992: 332). **solo tenuis**: 6.4n. *tenuis*. Columella, contemplating pruning vines to promote growth, has this expression twice (*RR* 4.11.1, 4); cf. Livy on Rome's rebirth after the Gallic sack *uelut ab stirpibus* (6.1.3), suggesting the agricultural practice of burning stubble or pasturage to improve growth of future crops (Oakley 1997: 386). Seneca talks similarly about the devastating fire at Lugdunum: *uasta uis ignium ... uertices ... ad humile deduxit* (*Ep.* 91.1). **septem reliquis**: I *Porta Capena*, II *Caelius*, III *Isis et Serapis*, VIII *Forum Romanum*, IX *Circus Flaminius*, XII *Piscina Publica*, and XIII *Auentinus*. Precise details are perhaps less important than the sense of evoking 'casualty figures' concluding a battle-narrative. **lacera et semusta**: the adjectives' final position adds clout. Poets often use *lacera* (WK 278; *TLL* s.v. *lacer* 820.25–7), only here in *A.* (4x *H.*; 1x *Agr.*, clustering in battle-descriptions), for mangled bodies (so personifying the city). Livy has *semusta* 3x (including the arresting *semusta truncata simulacra deum*, 31.30.7). Afterwards it is almost exclusively restricted to the poets.

41.1 Domuum . . . templorum: polysyndeton and homoioteleuton convey the scale of the losses. ‘domus is a detached house of some magnitude; *insulae* are blocks of tenements, built for multiple occupation, and, in Rome, offering a profitable investment for the owner/landlord. They varied both in size and quality’ (Martin 2001: 183). **numerum inire:** casualty figures often close battle-narratives. T.’s reluctance recalls an epic device about the impossibility of counting (e.g. Hom. *Il.* 2.488; Gowers 2005: 172 n. 7). Dio similarly catalogues temples and other buildings destroyed by a fire (AD 80; 65.24). **haud promptum fuerit** ‘it would not be easy’ (‘aoristic’ perfect potential subjunctive for present tense; Draeger §28b, *NLS* §119). Despite T.’s *aporia* (cf. *haud facile quis numerum inierit*, 2.83.2), he nevertheless catalogues the fire’s important architectural ‘casualties’. Seneca uses similar language about the fire at Lugdunum (*enumerare omnes . . . longum est, Ep.* 91.12). **uetustissima religione** ‘of oldest sanctity’ (ablative of quality, modifying the implied nominative subject *templa*). This superlative (once in Cic.), liked by Livy (12×), Columella (8×), Pliny the Elder (11×), and T. (19×; cf. *uetustissimum . . . templum quod tanta religione colitur*, [Caes.] *B. Alex.* 66.3, *templum Iunonis uetustate et religione percelebre*, *Mela Chor.* 2.41), suggests ‘edited highlights’: T. enumerates the oldest temples, but implies others were destroyed too. **quod:** sc. *templum*. **Seruius Tullius Lu<ci>nae:** sc. *sacrauerat*. The temple’s identity is disputed. M reads *Lunae*, suggesting Luna’s temple on the Aventine near the Circus Maximus (Livy 40.2.2, *Ov. F.* 3.884). Its doors blew off in a storm (182 BC; Livy 40.2.2), lightning struck it (84 BC) when Cinna died (App. *BC* 1.78; Richardson 1992: 238), and it housed bronzes brought from Corinth by Mummius (Vitruvius 5.5). Yet elsewhere Servius Tullius (*OCD*³), traditionally sixth king of Rome (579–535 BC), is not named as founder. He did however found the bigger temple of Diana (also known as Lucina, *Cat.* 34.13) higher up the Aventine (Livy 1.45.2, *Dion. Hal.* 4.26). T. probably means this temple. **et . . . -que . . . -que . . . et:** polysyndeton reflects the extensive physical losses. **ara fanumque . . . aedesque . . . delubrum:** *uariatio* of words for religious constructions kaleidoscopically conveys indiscriminate destruction. There are technical differences between the individual terms (Richardson 1992: 1–2). *fanum* (*OLD* 1; Livy 10.37.15; Oakley 2005b: 378) designates the consecrated site of Hercules’ altar. **praesenti Herculi Arcas Euander:** traditionally Evander founded the *Ara Maxima* for Hercules near the Circus Maximus’ northern end (12.24.1) to commemorate Cacus’ killing (Virg. *A.* 8.185–268; Gransden 1976: 117–18). Alternatively Hercules founded it (Livy 1.7.11, *Prop.* 4.9.68 with Hutchinson 2006: 218, *Ovid F.* 1.581; cf. *Dion. Hal.* 1.39–40). The story of Evander’s flight from the Peloponnese and settlement on the Palatine (cf. Pallanteum in Arcadia) accentuates Rome’s Greek cultural credentials, highlighted by *Arcas* (likewise *Arcade* . . .

Euandro, 11.14.3). Livy considered this altar ‘to have implications for the city’s future greatness (1.7)’ (Shannon 2012: 751). **aedesque Statoris Iouis uota Romulo:** Romulus vowed the temple (celebrating the *urbs seruata*) to Jupiter if he stopped the Romans fleeing from the Sabines (Livy 1.12.4–6, 10.37.15, *Plut. Rom.* 18.8). Its precise site is disputed, but was near the forum ‘on the Sacra Via and near the Porta Mugonia (D.H. ii.50.3, *Plut. Cic.* 16.3)’ (Richardson 1992: 225; Oakley 2005b: 378). By naming Romulus T. accentuates the temple’s venerability and distinguishes it from Metellus Macedonicus’ temple to Jupiter *Stator* in the Circus Flaminius. **Numaeque regia:** traditionally the Pontifex Maximus inhabited the palace of Numa Pompilius, second king of Rome (*Ov. F.* 6.263–4, *Tr.* 3.1.30), until Augustus handed it to the Vestals (*Suet. Iul.* 46, *Dio* 54.27.3). Located just outside the Forum Romanum near Vesta’s temple, it probably housed the *Annales Maximi* (*Gell.* 2.28.6). It had burned down previously (146 BC, 36 BC; Richardson 1992: 328–9; Littlewood 2006: 88–9). **delubrum Vestae . . . Romani:** 36.2n. *Vestae*. Aeneas brought the Penates (*OCD*³), Rome’s household gods, to Italy after escaping from burning Troy. Their unlikely survival, only to burn in AD 64, is shocking. Traditions variously describe them as anthropomorphic statues, metal heralds’ staffs, or earthenware vessels (*Dion. Hal.* 1.67–8). **exusta:** sc. *sunt*. Ellipse enhances the sense of multiple subjects dwarfing the main verb. The compound verb *exuro* (1× *Agr.*, 5× *A.*) appears in emotive settings, clustering in the final hexad (4×): cf. *uro* (1× *Agr.*, 1× *D.*, 1× *H.*, 4× *A.*). **opes . . . decora:** i.e. valuable spoils and artworks (cf. *H.* 3.71.2, *statuas, decora maiorum*). With *tot uictoriis* (instrumental ablative), T. introduces the weight of (idealised) history (cf. *Suet. N.* 38.2 on venerable generals’ burning houses *hostilibus adhuc spoliis adornatae*). Booty (sometimes bearing inscriptions) dedicated in temples or grand private dwellings regularly celebrated military success in Roman culture (Mayor 1872: 299–300 on *Juv.* 7.125; Horsfall 2000: 156–7 on *Virg. A.* 7.183–6; Schmeling 2011: 103 on *Petr.* 30.1). Even when mansions were sold, dismantling triumphal displays was forbidden: the buildings ‘eternally celebrated a triumph’ (Pliny *HN* 35.7). T. celebrates Greek artistic creativity with ‘masterpieces of Greek art’, circumscribed in Roman space: elsewhere he can be caustic (*quaeque alia laetum antiquitatibus Graecorum genus incertae uetustati affingit, H.* 2.4.1). **exim:** 12.1n. **monumenta ingeniorum antiqua et inrupta** ‘ancient and unspoilt records of talented men’ (sc. *exusta sunt*). The combination *monumenta antiquissima* is Ciceronian (*Verr.* I 1.14, II.4.106). T. elsewhere uses the superlative when discussing hieroglyphics (*ea antiquissima monimenta, 11.14.1*). Cf. *monumenta clarissimorum ingeniorum* (*Agr.* 2.1, amidst orchestrated book-burning), ‘a regular phrase for “literary works”’ (WK 79, comparing *Sen. Cons. Helv.* 1.2). These written works (*OLD monumentum* 4) perhaps

suggest burning libraries, but pontifical records were kept in temples too (Oakley 1997: 24–8). T. ‘bookends’ his list of temples with allusions to Livy’s monumental history (Shannon 2012: 752): first, *condendae urbis* (15.40.2) ~ *condendamue urbem* (Livy *Pr.* 6), now *incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis* (Livy *Pr.* 6). T. replays (with *uariatio*) Livy’s interpretation (6.1.1–3): the Gallic sack (390 BC) hampered historical writing, since fire destroyed the records, but in AD 64 (despite the fire) the historical record will prevail. Calling the writings *incorrupta* (OLD 1) precisely at their obliteration highlights their tragic loss. The sense ‘authentic’ (OLD 2b) is present too, suggesting the lost works’ quality. <ut> ... **multa seniores meminerint**: T. (3.16.1, 13.3.2) and others (WM 168–70: Thuc. 5.26.5, Plat. *Phaedr.* 274c, Cic. *Senec.* 43, Ov. *F.* 2.584, 4.377–9, *Met.* 8.617, Dio Chrys. 1.53–4, 11.37) cite unnamed older people as authoritative intermediaries. This ‘umbilical cord’ to the past allows T. to introduce indirect criticism. The text is tricky without Halm’s *ut*, introducing a result clause. **in tanta resurgentis urbis pulchritudine**: urban fires always offered opportunities to construct finer buildings (*meliora ... maiora celsioraque*, Sen. *Ep.* 91.13–14). The language of cyclical rebirth (*resurgentis*) recalls distant history: the second Punic war (*res Romana ... uelut resurgere ab stirpibus uideatur*, Livy 24.45.3) and Troy (*Troia, cades, et Troica Roma, resurges*, Propertius 4.1.87, Hutchinson 2006: 76; *euersaque, Troia, resurges*, Ov. *F.* 1.523). Nero now regressively repeats history by reenacting Troy’s sack. **quae reparari nequibant**: Otho contrasts Rome’s invaluable citizens with her (replaceable) buildings (*H.* 1.84.4). T. instead implies that some physical objects are irreplaceable.

41.2 fuere qui adnotarent: T. uses such distancing language elsewhere to report (without endorsement) an anonymous group’s viewpoint (cf. *H.* 1.7.2, 1.89.3, 2.56.1, 3.77.3, *A.* 3.5.1, 14.23.2, 15.59.1). His own narrative of the fire contains many allusions to the Gallic sack. *adnotarent* (generic subjunctive; *NLS* §155; 12.4n. *incenderent*) introduces an indirect statement. **quantum decimum Kalendas Sextiles** ‘the fourteenth [day before] the Kalends of August’ (sc. [*ante*] *quantum decimum [diem]* + accusative). Counting backwards inclusively, the fourteenth day before the Kalends (the first of the month) was 19 July (G-L appendix, 491–2; *OCD*³ ‘calendar, Roman’). Since the eighth month (previously sixth, hence *Sextilis*, counting from March, originally the first month until 153 BC) was officially renamed [*mensis*] *Augustus* (8 BC; Suet. *Aug.* 31.2, Macrobi. *Sat.* 1.13.35, Dio 55.6.5; Wardle 2014: 250–1), the nomenclature is pointedly old-fashioned and republican (Feeney 2007: 259 n. 221). Unlike some historians, T. supplies specific dates relatively often (*Agr.* 2×; *D.* 1×; *H.* 19×, including 11 in *H.* 1; *A.* 9×). **principium ... ortum**: sc. *esse*. This pleonasm (38.2n. *initium ... ortum*) is distinctively Livian (32.34.7, 38.1.1, 42.60.8),

aply so in a clause comparing the Neronian fire and Gallic sack (narrated by Livy). **quo et Senones captam urbem inflammauerint** ‘the day on which the Senones too set fire to the captured city’. The perfect subjunctive forms part of the subordinate clause in *oratio obliqua*, introduced by *adnotarent*. The Senones (*OCD*³; Oakley 2005b: 309–10), a Gallic tribe which settled at Sena Gallica in north-east Italy, defeated the Romans at Allia (18 July 390 BC), then captured and burned Rome. Their disruptions continued until 283 BC (Plb. 2.17, Diod. Sic. 14.113, Livy 5.35). The fire’s precise date (19 July 390 BC) must derive from the notorious date of the Allia defeat. In Dio, people likewise compare the Gallic sack during the fire, but without the calendrical dimension (62.17.3). T. has *inflammo* (a Ciceronian favourite [103×] also in Ennius and Accius) only here. Synchronism of notable events attracted comment (Kraus 1994a: 93–4) and the calendar had many officially ominous days (Oakley 1997: 395–6). Cf. Vitellius, inauspiciously becoming *pontifex maximus* on 18 July, the anniversary of Roman defeats at Cremera (477 BC) and Allia (390 BC; *H.* 2.91.1, Ash 2007: 352–3). **alii eo usque cura<e> progressi sunt** ‘others have gone to such trouble’. The partitive genitive *curae* is Woodman’s suggestion for the awkward *cura* (ablative of respect) of the MSS (cf. *eo usque scientiae progredi*, Quint. 2.1.6; 1.2n. *eo contemptiois descensum*). T.’s *eo usque* casts such meticulous attention as contrived, but he still reports the chronological curiosity. **totidem annos mensesque et dies**: 454 years (between 390 BC and AD 64) can be expressed in ‘portentous arithmetic’ (Feeney 2007: 106): 418 years, 418 months, 418 days. This device for imposing improbably perfect symmetry derives from ‘cubing’, reflecting how ‘the number three and its multiples play a large part in Roman and Greek ritual and magic’ (Clausen 1994: 258–9; cf. Dio 62.18.3, the Sibylline oracle about Rome’s destruction after ‘thrice three-hundred years’). Pythagoras liked organising material by mathematical cubes (Vitr. 5 *Pr.* 3) and Plato describes the ‘perfect number’ (*RP* 8.546B–C). Dividing time or space into meaningful numerical units imposed control on an often confusing world (cf. Rubincam 2003: 448 on a ‘modern day Pheidippides’ who died in AD 2000 after completing his marathon in 3 hours, 3 minutes, and 3 seconds). **numerent**: the present subjunctive indicates an extant source (probably written) which T. could still consult. Cf. his own caution about counting (15.41.1).

42–5 Deviant Reconstruction

T. presents the Golden House, like the man who conceived it, as outrageously transgressive. Whether constructed opportunistically or with malice aforethought, Nero’s new palace (or, in Piso’s scornful words, *illa inuisa et spoliis civium exstructa domus*, 15.52.1) was a public relations

disaster (Morford 1968). Its size, luxury, visibility, and location together reflected Nero's egotism, encapsulated in his colossal bronze statue in the vestibule, 120 feet high (Suet. *N.* 31, Mart. *Spec.* 2). It was never finished. After the civil war (AD 68-9), the new Flavian dynasty pointedly reappropriated this private space for the people by building the Flavian amphitheatre (mod. Colosseum) and Titus' baths. Martial celebrates the new buildings, *deliciae populi, quae fuerant domini* (*Spec.* 2.12). Similarly Augustus replaced Vedius Pollio's private mansion (Ov. *F.* 6.641) with the *Porticus Liviae*.

Descriptions of palaces are well established in ancient literature: e.g. those of Alcinous (Hom. *Od.* 7.84-132), Aetes (Apoll. Rhod. 3.213-48), Pico (Virg. *A.* 7.170-86), the Sun (Ov. *M.* 2.1-18), Cleopatra (Luc. 10.111-26), Cupid (Apul. *M.* 5.1). Although in the ecphrastic rhetorical tradition 'villa' descriptions proliferate (Stat. *Silu.* 1.3, 2.2, Pliny *Ep.* 2.17, 5.6), crucially these are country villas, providing 'all the comforts of the city without the inconveniences of noise, dirt, and crowds' (Newlands 2002: 122). Since such architectural ecphrasis was familiar, T. needed novel techniques to captivate readers. His remarkably spare description highlights the most deviant element (*rus in urbe*) rather than cataloguing decadent architectural features well known from elsewhere. He virtually 'censors' the house's inside to focus exclusively on the transgressive external space. T. omits the notorious banquet hall, with its revolving circular ceiling resembling the night sky (Suet. *N.* 31.2) and the decor (e.g. the famous artist Famulus' work, 'imprisoned' in the Golden House, Pliny *HN* 35.120), thus enacting a kind of *damnatio memoriae*.

This section also contains one of the most closely analysed and controversial passages in T. – his account of Nero punishing Christians as scapegoats, either in the arena or by burning them as human torches (15.44.2-5). Some see this material as a later Christian interpolation (Carrier 2014), resulting in a 'back-dating' of state-driven persecution. Others see the passage as genuine, but anachronistic and not reflecting the realities of AD 64 (Shaw 2015). T. is the first extant source explicitly to connect the persecution of the Christians with the fire, although Suetonius talks broadly about Nero punishing Christians (*N.* 16.2). For T. the most significant point is about Nero's relationship with his subjects: although he had chosen his scapegoats well (44.5n. *fontes*), against the odds people still pity these Christians as victims of his savagery.

On the Golden House, see *OCD*³ 'Domus Aurea', Morford 1968, Griffin 1984: 137-42, Richardson 1992: 119-21, Elsner 1994, *LTUR* ii.49-50 (Cassatella), Champlin 2003: 178-209, Coleman 2006: 14-36. On the Christians, see Champlin 2003: 121-6, Cook 2010, Wagemakers 2010, Meier 2012, Carrier 2014, Shaw 2015.

42.1 Ceterum 'Moreover' (transitional, not adversative, *OLD* 5b). **Nero** ... **illudere**: the simple main clause about constructing the house precedes lavish subordinate clauses (the long relative clause *in qua ... prospectus*; the ablative absolute *magistris ... Celere*; another relative clause *quibus ... illudere*). The syntactical 'architecture' mirrors the complex building project described. **usus est patriae ruinis**: Rome hyperbolically becomes *patria*: cf. *urbis ruinis* (*H.* 3.35.1 [Cremona]; *inter ruinam*, *A.* 2.47.1 [Asian cities destroyed in an earthquake]). The disclaimer Gaius Silo uses *patriae ruinae* emotively (Sen. *Contr.* 10.5.1; Val. Max. 6.5(ext).2), while plural *ruinae* trumps singular *ruina + patriae* (Livy 45.26.6, Ovid *M.* 8.498). Nero's opportunism recalls Crassus, who infamously bought fire-damaged property in Rome, although even he 'built no house for himself other than the one in which he lived' (Plut. *Crass.* 2). **exstruxitque**: 39.2n. **haud proinde ... quam** 'not so much ... as'. T. likes negated *proinde + quam* (6× *H.*, 3× *A.*; otherwise only in Plaut. *Truc.* 324, Gell. 9.3.5), whereas other authors prefer *ac* or *atque*. MSS often disagree whether to read *proinde* or *perinde* (Ash 2007: 149; WK 139-40). **gemmae et aurum ... solita pridem et luxu uulgata** 'jewels and gold ... items long familiar and made trite by luxurious living'; 37.1n. *luxu* (causal ablative). Cf. Columella's *indignatio* about the thrush as *luxuria cottidiana* in culinary terms (8.10.6). Dismissing jewels and gold as hackneyed contrasts with Suetonius' version: *cuncta auro lita, distincta gemmis* (*N.* 31.2). Apparently the Golden House used to gleam (*radiabant*, Martial *Spec.* 2.3). Even gilding the Capitoline temple roof after a fire (83 BC) provoked disapproval (Pliny *HN* 33.57; cf. *ut ... tecta auro fulgeant*, Sen. *Contr.* 2.1.11). Yet gold did resist fire (*HN* 33.59). Perhaps architects saw it as both aesthetic and practical. **miraculo essent** 'were to stir wonder'. The predicative dative introduces wonder, often positive in architectural descriptions (cf. *mirer*, Stat. *Silu.* 1.3.37, 1.3.57, 2.2.45), but double-edged here. The subjunctive *essent* expresses Nero's purpose. **arua et stagna**: in one urban villa, water-features appear as *trompe l'œil* decorations on marble walls: *perspicui uiuunt in marmore fontes* (Statius *Silu.* 1.2.155). Nero's 'well-attested fascination with water as a decorative element' (Griffin 1984: 127) instead favours real pools, *stagna Neronis* (Mart. *Spec.* 2.6; Coleman 2006: 31-2). Suetonius specifies only one *stagnum*, albeit ocean-sized (*N.* 31.1). 'The lake was an entirely artificial structure fed ultimately by the aqueduct on the Caelian' (Coleman 2006: 32; cf. perennial natural streams supplying Pliny's villa, *Ep.* 5.6.11). Suetonius captures the estate's artful diversity: *rura insuper aruis atque uinetis et pascuis siluisque uaria* (*N.* 31.1). Elsewhere, this *superbus ager* deprives the poor of their homes (Martial *Spec.* 2.8). **in modum solitudinum** 'in the manner of solitary places'. Although *solitudo* was a conventional attraction of country life (4.41.3; MW 199), this was the heart of Rome. One declamation condemns rich people who demarcate land: *iam etiam deuios saltus et siluas*

uasta solitudine horridas [sc. *diuites*] *occupant* ([Quint.] *Decl. Mai.* 13.11). **hinc siluae, inde aperta spatia et prospectus**: demonstratives (*hinc... inde*) enhance vividness (Ash 2007: 274). The contrived landscaping contrasts (e.g.) with the wild setting of Picus' palace, *horrendum siluis* (Virg. *A.* 7.172). Compare Virgil's description of the transformed Capitol, symbolising Rome's global power: *aurea nunc, olim siluestribus horrida dumis* (*A.* 8.348). Fragmenting the cityscape and controlling sightlines could powerfully express imperial power (Barchiesi 2009: 180–1). **magistris et machinatoribus** 'as supervisors and engineers' (*OLD* *magister* 5c; *OLD* *machinator* 1). *magister* for the professional designation *architectus* (cf. *H.* 1.27.1) allows alliteration. **Seuero et Celere**: T. names these minor characters (otherwise unknown) for impact and wit: 'Austere' and 'Speedy' oversee a frivolous building project which was never completed. **ingenium et audacia**: in Vitruvius, good architects need *ingenium*, but also *disciplina* (1.1.3). Juvenal condemns arriviste Greeks for *ingenium uelox, audacia perdita* (3.73). The combination *audacia* + *esse* + dative + infinitive is Statian (*Th.* 9.537, 12.10; cf. *Sen. Dial.* 2.11.2). **etiam quae natura denegauisset**: *denego* (2× *D.*; 3× *A.*, all in *A.* 15) clusters in our book. The verb is generic subjunctive (*NLS* §155; 12.4n. *incenderent*) and the whole phrase serves as object of *temptare*. The desire to outdo nature (here applied to the architects, not Nero himself), often articulated through building projects, typifies absolute kings (Purcell 1987: 190) and others (e.g. Lucan's Caesar, Curtius' Alexander). Distorting nature through building projects can be cast positively (*nec seruat Natura uices*, Statius *Silu.* 1.2.156; similarly, she is *docilis*, 2.2.53) although there is often 'tension between admiring amazement at man's control of nature and moral disapproval of human hubris' (Hardie 2009: 12). **per artem temptare** 'to attempt through artificial methods' (*OLD* *ars* 2). *ars* and *natura* are often cast as adversaries (e.g. *simulauerat artem | ingenio natura suo*, *Ov. M.* 3.158–9). Valerius Maximus gathers examples where *natura* trumps *ars* (8.11.ext.5–7). **uiribus principis illudere**: the sentence ends bathetically with practical consequences (*OLD* *uis* 26b, indicating financial resources). *illudo* (*OLD* 3) + dative is peculiarly Tacitean (Ash 2007: 364), recalling Vitellius at his most escapist (*pecuniae illudere*, *H.* 2.94.3). Even after Nero's suicide, Otho allocated 50 million HS to finish the Golden House (Suet. *O.* 7.1). Vitruvius longed for regulations to spare those commissioning building projects from endless expenses and to restrain architects (10 *Pr.* 2).

4.2.2 ab lacu Auerno: Romans believed that lake Avernus (*OCD*³), a deep volcanic crater near Puteoli, led to the underworld. Agrippa, exploiting natural resources, linked Lake Lucrinus (near the shore on the Bay of Naples) and Avernus (further inland) to create the *Portus Iulius* (Virg. *G.* 2.164; Paget 1968: 164; Mynors 1990: 122–3), but it soon silted up.

nauigabilem fossam: such projects attract (often critical) attention: cf. the pharaoh Sesostri's network of dykes throughout Egypt (Hdt. 2.108), Xerxes' canal across the promontory of Mount Athos (Hdt. 7.24), and Caesar (Plut. *Caes.* 58.8, Suet. *Iul.* 44.3, Dio 44.5.1) then Nero (Quint. 3.8.16, Stat. *Silu.* 4.3.59–60, Suet. *N.* 19.2, [Lucian] *Nero* 1–4, Philostratus *VA* 4.24; *nefastum inceptum*, Pliny *HN* 4.10) attempting to cut through the Isthmus of Corinth. **usque ad ostia Tiberina** 'all the way to the mouth of the Tiber' (poetic plural; cf. *ostio Tiberino*, Cic. *Rep.* 2.5). This ambitious project (creating a safe inland waterway from the Bay of Naples to Ostia) required reviving Agrippa's works and digging a new channel beyond Avernus. The planned canal would be 160 miles long and wide enough for ships with five banks of oars to pass each other (Suet. *N.* 31.3). Claudius' similar project (draining the Fucine Lake by linking it with the river Liris) took 30,000 workers eleven years to dig 3.5 miles, partly under modern Monte Salviano (12.56.1, *perrupto monte*, Pliny *HN* 36.124, Suet. *Cl.* 20). Claudius had already undertaken much excavation around Portus, north of the Tiber's mouth, and constructed canals to relieve Rome's flooding (*CIL* XIV 85, AD 46; Keay, Millett, and Strutt 2008: 99–101). **depressuros**: sc. *esse* + *se*. **squalenti litore aut per montes aduersos** 'along the barren shore or through a barrier of mountains'. *uariatio* (ablative of route [*NLS* §43.4] and prepositional phrase) highlights the damning coda. (Poetic) *squaleo* (Virg. *G.* 1.507, *Sil.* 1.211, 8.475), only here in T., is also associated with mourning (Mynors 1990: 98). Statius criticises Nero's ambitious canal while celebrating Domitian's *Via Domitiana* (*nec frangit uada montibusque caesis | inducit Nero sordidas paludes*, *Silu.* 4.7–8). Pliny notes how the unfinished canal deprives a vineyard of water (*HN* 14.61). **neque enim aliud umidum gignendis aquis** 'That is to say, no other damp terrain for generating water' ('expository' *enim*, *OLD* 7). The all-embracing *neque... aliud umidum* underscores the project's folly. Where other authors often associate *gigno* with nature's bountifulness (e.g. *gigni autem terram aquam ignem, tum ex iis omnia*, Cic. *Luc.* 118; *uberrimum gignendis uuis solum*, Curt. 6.4.21), here it denotes a natural obstacle (no water for the canal). Seneca has similar phrasing (*ad gignendam aquam*, *NQ* 2.26.1). **Pomptinae paludes**: the Via Appia crossed these malarial marshes (c.30 × 8 miles) located along Latium's coast between Circeii and Terracina. Horace got sick while travelling through them (*Sat.* 1.5.7; cf. Vitruvius 1.4.12). Many tried unsuccessfully to drain them (Cic. *Phil.* 5.7, Plut. *Caes.* 58.9, Suet. *Iul.* 44.3; cf. Quint. 3.8.16, Pliny *HN* 26.19) until Mussolini finally succeeded (1930). **cetera abrupta aut arentia**: sc. *erant*. The alliterative phrase operates chiasmically with *squalenti litore aut per montes aduersos*. The Augustan poets, Seneca the Younger, and Lucan like the adjective *arens* (only here in T.). The precipitous terrain would generate particular engineering challenges in channelling the water: the

librator was the professional assigned to such jobs (Pliny *Ep.* 10.41). **si perrumpi possent**: the forcefully alliterative protasis in this unreal conditional clearly implies its opposite, i.e. that the difficult terrain could not be breached. *perrumpo* recurs for overcoming natural obstacles (*perruptas Alpes*, *H.* 3.53.1; *Rhenum perrumperet*, *H.* 4.12.3). **nec satis causae**: yet the coast around the Cape of Misenum was dangerous. T. records a naval disaster this very same year (15.46.2). **incredibilium cupitor**: T. coins this agent noun (also 12.7.2; 2x in Apuleius) evoking Sallust's Catiline: *animus ... incredibilia ... semper cupiebat* (*BC* 5.3). Suetonius attributes a similar trait (less succinctly) to Caligula: *nihil tam efficere concupiscebat quam quod posse effici negaretur* (*Cal.* 37.2). Such passion for wonders also recalls the Greeks: *promptis Graecorum animis ad noua et mira* (5(6).10.1). **effodere proxima Auerno iuga**: cf. 2.61.1 *lacusque effossa humo* (Lake Moeris in Egypt). Avernus' proximity (and T.'s using *effodio* for *perfordio*) eerily suggests Nero burrowing down to the underworld. Transgressive digging recurs elsewhere (e.g. *Sen. NQ* 1.17.6, 5.15.1–5), including Nero's attempt to excavate Dido's gold (with verbal echoes *spe inani* and *effosso agro*, 16.3). **conisus est**: this verb featuring 'once previously in the A. (11.31.3) comes back four times in short intervals in A.15' (Syme 1958: 741; A. 15.51.1, 57.2, 66.2). Accius has *conitor* + infinitive (again, 15.51.1; + *ad*, 15.66.2), which Livy revives (*TLL* s.v. *conitor* 319.36–45; Oakley 2005b: 412–13). Emperors did sometimes symbolically dig the first spadeful (Suet. *N.* 19.2, *Vesp.* 8.5, *Dio* 66.10), but the third-person singular categorically blames Nero for the whole project. **manentque uestigia irritae spei**: these physical traces (still visible for T.'s readers) immortalise Nero's frustrated hopes (cf. Xerxes, hoping that his Isthmus canal project would commemorate his rule, *Hdt.* 7.24). When Pliny urges Trajan to link a lake near Nicomedia with the sea 'to accomplish what kings could only attempt' (*Ep.* 10.41.5), Trajan is cautious (*Ep.* 10.42). T. likes *uestigia* + *manere* for highlighting surviving physical remains of a past event (*G.* 37.1, *H.* 5.7.1; cf. *Cic. Verr.* II 5.186, *ut ... uestigia ... maneant*). T. combines *spes* + *irrita* again (16.26.3; otherwise only *Livy* 22.20.8, *Luc.* 5.469, *Stat. Th.* 10.45).

43.1 Ceterum urbis: *urbis* is partitive genitive, with *ea* (antecedent of *quae ... supererant* below) omitted. This paragraph's opening suggestively reprises the previous one, *Ceterum Nero* (15.42.1): Nero and his palace pointedly come first, with Rome demoted to second place. **quae domui supererant**: anti-Neronian sources persistently stress that the Golden House and Rome are co-extensive (or worse): *aureae domus ambientis urbem* (Pliny *HN* 33.54), *unaque iam tota stabat in urbe domus* (*Mart. Spec.* 2.4), *Roma domus fiet* (Suet. *N.* 39.2, citing a popular lampoon). Cf. Vedius Pollio's mansion (*urbis opus domus una fuit*, *Ov. F.* 6.641). **post Gallica incendia** is either a rhetorical plural or reflects the multiple fires set during

the Gallic sack (*inter incendia ac ruinas captae urbis*, *Livy* 5.43.1). **nulla distinctione nec passim erecta**: sc. *sunt* (*uariatio* of descriptive ablative and adverb). After the Gallic sack the city was hastily rebuilt, without demarcating straight blocks (*Livy* 5.55.4, *Plut. Cam.* 32.3). **dimensis ... protegerent**: five ablative phrases in polysyndeton, with the verbal element (or equivalent) commencing each one, capture the methodical and expansive reconstruction. The details (especially wide streets and porticoes) evoke Alexander the Great's foundation of Alexandria, planned by the architect Dinocrates (*Diod. Sic.* 17.52, *Strabo* 17.1.8, *Plut. Alex.* 26.3–10). **dimensis uicorum ordinibus** 'rows of blocks measured out' (cf. pre-fire: *angustius flexurisque uicorum*, *Suet. N.* 38.1). Professional surveyors (*mensores*) conducting such work were in high demand (*Pliny Ep.* 10.18.3). Virgil even advises measuring out vineyards carefully (*omnia sint paribus numeris dimensa uiarum*, *G.* 2.284). **latis uiarum spatiis**: these wide streets were planned as natural fire-breaks, even if these sometimes failed (cf. the fire at Nicomedeia 'jumping' *quamquam uia interiacente*, *Pliny Ep.* 10.33). Not all the work got completed: the senate thanked Vespasian (AD 71) for repairing at his own expense streets dilapidated *neglegentia superiorum temporum* (*CIL* VI 931). Cf. Cicero highlighting Rome's strikingly narrow streets (*angustissimis semitis*, *Leg. Agr.* 2.35.96). **cohibitaque aedificiorum altitudine**: Crassus blamed excessively large and closely packed buildings for the fires plaguing Rome (*Plut. Crass.* 2.3). Likewise the declaimer Papirius Fabianus complains that the *altitudo aedificiorum* allows fires (*Sen. Contr.* 2.1.11). Vitruvius (less dramatically) observes that tall walls and narrow streets restrict visibility (6.6.6). Rutilius wrote about the height of buildings in a work (now lost) recommended to the people by edict (*Suet. Aug.* 89.2; *Wardle* 2014: 497), perhaps when Augustus was restricting the height of buildings to 70 feet (*Strabo* 5.3.7). Although legislation periodically sought to control the height of *insulae*, it was ineffectual (*Mart.* 1.117.7, 7.20.20, *Juv.* 3.199–200, *Gell.* 15.1.2). Trajan had to reimpose restrictions limiting height to 60 feet ([*Aur. Vict.*] *Epit.* 13.13). **patefactis areis** 'spaces were opened up'. **additisque porticibus ... protegerent**: Suetonius also highlights buildings surrounded by porticoes from whose flat roofs *incendia arcerentur* (*N.* 16.1). The subjunctive indicates purpose after the relative *quae*. Elsewhere T. only has people as the subject of *protego* (G-G 1225^B). Such flat roofs could serve more dangerous purposes (*porticus ... in quarum tectum egressi saxis tegulisque Vitellianos obruebant*, *H.* 3.71.1).

43.2 sua pecunia: i.e. at his own expense, not from the *aerarium*. Whereas Tiberius spent 100 million HS buying fire-damaged property (6.45.1; *Dio* 59.9.4 for Caligula), Suetonius says only that Nero promised to remove debris without charge (*N.* 38.3). Cf. *Frontinus Aq.* 125 (a senatorial decree

celebrating Augustus' undertaking repairs *impensa sua*). **exstructurum:** 39.2n. **pollicitus est:** sc. *se*. 'When used in a public context ... the word has a kind of contractual connotation' (Rodgers 2004: 315). **addidit praemia pro cuiusque ordine et rei familiaris copiis** 'he added inducements in proportion to each person's rank and family resources' (*OLD pro* 12). T. implies that the richer the individual, the bigger the financial incentive: *praemium* comes uncomfortably close to suggesting bribery (*OLD* 1). Suetonius' more positive formulation about Augustus encouraging prominent men to build (or rebuild) in Rome is illuminating: *ceteros principes uiros saepe hortatus est ut pro facultate quisque ... urbem adornarent* (*Aug.* 29.4; Wardle 2014: 233–6; similarly, Vell. 2.89.4, *hortatu principis*). Pointedly too, Tiberius after a serious fire donates money proportionate to the damage (*tribuendo pecunias ex modo detrimenti*, 4.64.1). **finiuitque tempus** 'he specified the time' (*OLD finio* 5). Nero now controls urban time, as well as space. Owners of vacant sites sometimes delayed rebuilding, prompting Vespasian to allow anyone to seize such land in Rome and commence building (*Suet. Vesp.* 8.5). Building contracts usually included fixed times for completion (DeLaine 2000: 125). **apiscerentur** 'they were to acquire them'. Since this verb (12× in T., only in A.) is deponent (*OLD apiscor* 2), we must understand an accusative *ea* (sc. *praemia*) as its object.

43.3 ruderi accipiendo ... onustae rudere: Suetonius suggests that Nero removed rubble free of charge, but looted the ruined houses (*N.* 38.3). T. only has *rudus* twice: its repetition within one sentence verbally 'piles' up rubble, elegantly mirroring the problem. Frontinus describes how even the hills around Rome have grown taller from the rubble perennially dumped after fires (*Aq.* 18.2). **Ostienses paludes destinabat, utique ... ambirentur:** because of unauthorised dumping, Augustus dredged the Tiber (*completum olim ruderibus*, *Suet. Aug.* 30.1; Wardle 2014: 242). *destinabat* introduces syntactical variation ('double construction'): (i) direct accusative object (*OLD destino* 4 'earmark'), (ii) extended *ut* clause (*OLD destino* 3) comprising five elements (*decurrerent / solidarentur / custodes / haberet / ambirentur*). In T. *destino* normally takes the infinitive: elsewhere only the jurist Ulpian, citing Labeo (*TLL* s.v. *destino* 758.69–72), has the unusual construction with *ut* (again 15.65). **subuectassent:** this pluperfect subjunctive would have been future perfect in direct speech (*G-L* §516). This frequentative verb (a poeticism, only here in T.) suggests effort: the river journey from Ostia to Rome was c.22 miles and took three days (Mattingly and Aldrete 2000: 149; 18.2n. *Tiberi subuectas*). Virgil uses *subuecto* especially for men carrying building materials (*A.* 11.131, 474). **decurrerent** indicates travelling downstream to the coast (*OLD* 4b; cf. *decurrere ad litus*, 14.8.1). **certa sui parte** 'to a specified extent' (Woodman). The ablative *parte* without a preposition functions locatively

('often of words which themselves denote a place or district, when they are qualified by an epithet', *NLS* §51 (ii)). **saxo Gabino Albanoue:** both are varieties of local volcanic rock, known today as 'peperino' (like black pepper) for their dark-grey lava fragments. The quarry at Gabii (c.12 miles east of Rome) was 'more serviceable to Rome than any other' (*Strabo* 5.3.10), producing rough, hard Gabine stone (used in the *Cloaca Maxima*). 'Soft' Alban stone (quarried near modern Marino in the Alban hills, c.13 miles south-east of Rome) was comparatively malleable (*Vitr.* 2.7.1) and lighter grey than Gabine: '*Lapis Gabinus* has a distinctive layered appearance with olive-gray, coarse-, and fine-grained beds; and *Lapis Albanus* has a homogeneous fabric with scattered lava and limestone fragments that stand out against a light olive-gray matrix' (Jackson and Marra 2006: 421, with photographs, 415). **solidarentur** 'should be consolidated [exclusively]' (*OLD* 2a). Vitruvius, Lucan, Seneca, Statius, and Apuleius like (*Virgilian, G.* 1.179) *solido*. **ignibus imperuius est:** since the rare adjective *imperuius* (an Ovidian coinage describing a river, *M.* 9.106 – a typically innovative 'double composite'; then 1× Quint., 2× V. Fl., 2× T.: 3.31.5) normally designates things impassable to people, applying it to *ignibus* enhances personification. The present tense (*est*) explains the (still valid) choice of stone (cf. Vitruvius 2.7.3 on varieties of fireproof stone). Given the prevalence of fires, contemporaries doubtless knew this, but T. envisages a remoter audience for his narrative.

43.4 aqua priuatorum licentia intercepta: *aqua* (subject of *fluere* in the subordinate clause) is prominently displaced. Illegal interception of water was rife in Rome. Private consumers were supposed to pay subscriptions to draw water from the public supply by a *calix* (draw-pipe), but cheating was possible: 'The *calix* might carry the wrong stamp, or not be stamped at all, or it might be of a larger size than that authorised if the gang carrying out the work had been well-bribed' (Dodge 2000: 188). Frontinus, complaining about shops, garrets, and brothels illegally siphoning the public system's water (*Aq.* 76.2), contrasts ancestral care for the common good with private luxury (*Aq.* 95). Nero has already 'polluted' one aqueduct's source by swimming there (14.22.4). **quo largior et pluribus locis in publicum fluere** 'so that it would flow more lavishly and in more places for the public benefit'. Nero regulates the water supply for public benefit but his Golden House (conspicuous for decorative water-features, 42.1n. *arua et stagna*) will exploit it for private enjoyment. The *arcus Neroniani* (*Front. Aq.* 20.3) transported water from the *Aqua Claudia* along the Caelian hill for onward distribution (cf. *inde distribueretur, Aq.* 76.6): 'its water, second only to the Marcia in quality (*Aq.* 13.4), entered the city at a higher elevation, making possible its distribution over a wide area (*Aq.* 18.4)' (Evans 1994:

120). Although the Golden House triggered this improvement, the city's water supply generally benefited. **custodēs <essent>**: *essent* is Madvig's emendation. The subjunctive still depends on *destinabat + utique* above. *Circitores* (also a military term, Veg. *Mil.* 3.8.5), watchmen or inspectors, were in the maintenance crews for aqueducts (Front. *Aq.* 117.1; Rodgers 2004: 300). **subsidia reprimendis ignibus**: dative gerundive of purpose (4.1n. *tuendae*). Fire-fighting apparatus included the water-machine of Ctesibius (Vitr. 10.7) or *sipho*, 'fire-extinguisher', and basic items e.g. a *hama*, 'fire-bucket' (Pliny *Ep.* 10.33). **in propatulo** 'in the forecourt' (*OLD propatulus* 2). Hence anyone from the street could access equipment. At the finale of Trimalchio's dinner, *uigiles* materialise showering water around, thinking that the house is ablaze (Petr. 78.7). They presumably grabbed equipment from the forecourt. **quisque haberet**: Trajan resists when Pliny suggests creating a fire brigade at Nicomedia (it might develop a political identity), preferring house-owners to supply equipment to extinguish fires (*Ep.* 10.34). Some wealthy people even had their own fire crews (Juv. 14.305–6). **nec communione parietum, sed propriis quaeque muris**: sc. *aedificia*; 38.2n. *domus ... saeptae*. The word-order *propriis quaeque muris* mirrors the concept described and *paries / murus* adds *uariatio* (cf. Pliny *Pan.* 49.1). Elevated language (abstract for concrete phrasing: cf. *communibus parietibus*) designates the more humble structure (common walls). T. has *communio* once elsewhere in the context of grand international diplomacy (*communione uictoriae*, 12.19.2).

43.5 **ea ex utilitate accepta decorum quoque nouae urbi attulere** 'These measures, welcomed for their practicality, also brought splendour to the new city'. Nero sought the glory *condendae urbis nouae* (15.40.2). Now apparently he has his 'new city'. Accentuating both attractiveness and utility reflects rhetoricians' advice about successfully praising places (*similiter speciem et utilitatem intuemur*, Quint. 3.7.27). Even so, under Vespasian Rome was still *deformis ... ueteribus incendiis ac ruinis* (Suet. *Vesp.* 8.5) after the Neronian fire and the burning of the Capitol (AD 69). **erant tamen qui**: 41.2n. *fuere qui*. **salubritati magis conduxisse**: Vitruvius, discussing how town-layout can promote healthiness (*salubritas*, 1.5.1), focuses on climate (6.1.1). Colder places should have buildings *maxime conclusa et non patentia*, but north-facing, *patentiora* structures are better in hot locations (6.1.2). **angustiae itinerum** (43.1n. *latis uiarum spatiis*) has military associations (Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.52, Caes. *BG* 1.39.6, 1.40.10, 7.11.8). **altitudo tectorum**: 43.1n. *cohibitaque aedificiorum altitudine*. **solis uapore** 'by the boiling sun' (Woodman). This phrase evokes Lucretius (6x) who regularly uses *uapor* (*OLD* 2) for 'heat' (Kenney 2014: 135). Elsewhere T. has *uapore ignis* for a funeral pyre (11.3.2). **perrumperentur ... defensam**: the virtual oblique subjunctive expresses the internal critics' viewpoint. Both verbs sustain the military metaphor of the city

besieged by solar heat (WM 351). Cf. *adsueti longo muros defendere bello | ... si qua | possent tectam aciem perrumpere* (Virg. *A.* 9.511–13). **at nunc**: 21.1n. **grauiore aestu ardescere** 'scorched under a more intense heat'. T. likes (largely poetical) *ardesco* (Goodyear 1972: 249), evocative of disease on the analogy of *ardeo* (WM 392). '*gravis* is often used of illness ... (TLL 6.2.2282.79ff, 2282.23ff)' (WM 255). So the burnt city is now 'fevered'.

44.1 **haec quidem humanis consiliis prouidebantur** 'These at any rate were the precautions being taken by human planning' (*OLD quidem* 1c). **mox petita dis piacula**: sc. *sunt*. The clause is in adversative asyndeton after *quidem* above. Documenting the city's reconstruction *before* the expiation of the gods (made to wait their turn) is pointed (cf. *Tum dona et grates deis decernuntur*, 15.74.1). A *piaculum* could involve sacrificing animals (*OLD* 1) or conducting another expiatory rite (*OLD* 2) to win the gods' favour. **aditque Sibyllae libri**: sc. *sunt*. *libros adire* is standard language for consulting the Sibylline books (Cic. *Verr.* II 4.108, Livy 5.13.6, 22.9.9, 36.37.4, 41.21.11), but the genitive proper noun injects novelty (again 6.12.1; cf. *libri Sibyllini aditi sunt*, Livy. 5.13.6). King Tarquinius Priscus bought three books of prophecies from the Cumaean Sibyl (*OCD*³; originally an individual, but later generically indicating a prophetess) and entrusted them to a priestly college for consultation during crises. After the books were destroyed when Jupiter's Capitoline temple caught fire (83 BC), the senate retrieved copies from various places. Augustus, assembling a new official collection, deposited it in the Palatine library (Oakley 1998: 251–2; Cic. *Diu.* 2.112, Dion. Hal. 4.62.1–6, Pliny *HN* 13.88, Gell. 1.19). The priests who interpreted the books were the *quindecimuirī sacris faciundis* (T. held this post, 11.11.1). **supplicatum Vulcano et Cereri Proserpinaeque**: sc. *est*. T. has *supplicō* (itself not unusual) only here. Propitiating the fire-god was obvious. After the fire Nero apparently vowed monumental altars to Vulcan, which were eventually built by Domitian with provision for annual sacrifices of red animals at the Vulcanalia on 23 August (*CIL* VI.1 826): 'the annual rituals celebrated at the *Arae*, in concert with the ancient citywide veneration of Vulcan, would now perpetually renew the memory of Nero's disgrace' (Closs 2016: 120). Ceres (with Liber / Bacchus and Libera Proserpina, 2.49.1) had a temple on the Aventine's lower slope near where the fire started (Richardson 1992: 80–1), but her general associations with fruitfulness are relevant. **propitiata Iuno per matronas**: old poets have *propitio* (again in T. only at *D.* 9.5), which Valerius Maximus revived and later prose authors adopted. Married women courted Juno (goddess of marriage): to her temple on the Aventine they carried a bronze statue (218 BC; Livy 21.62.8) and a golden basin (207 BC; Livy 27.37.10). On sarcophagi representing weddings Juno *pronuba* appears between bride and groom as they clasp hands (Wood 1978: 504–5). **in**

Capitolio: T. probably means the temple for the Capitoline triad (Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno, Minerva; Richardson 1992: 221–2) rather than Juno Moneta’s temple on the *arx* (by Nero’s day primarily a mint). **proximum mare:** probably at Ostia. **templum ... perspersum est:** the rare, archaic compound *perspergo* (Cato the Elder *Agr.* 130, Cic. *De oratore* 1.159; 5× Apuleius) highlights the ceremony. Other goddesses had similar purificatory rituals (originally Greek): Hera (Ael. *Nat. Anim.* 12.30), Athena (Callimachus *Hymn* 5, addressing the ‘bathpourers of Pallas’), Tellus (*G.* 40.4), Venus (Ov. *F.* 4.135–8; Fantham 1998: 117–18), and Cybele (Ov. *F.* 4.337–40, Dio 48.43.4–6). Women conducted the washing, often taking the statue to the sea or river for her ritual bath. In Greece, most bathing ceremonies ‘involved Hera and seem to have been connected with purification, or restoration of virginity, after her Sacred Marriage with Zeus’ (Bulloch 1985: 9). **sellisternia ac peruigilia:** a *sellisternium* (rare: Festus 1×, T. 1×) was a religious banquet where images of goddesses sat on chairs (cf. the *lectisternium* for gods; 23.3n. *puluinar*). Valerius Maximus contrasts Jupiter reclining on a *lectulus* with Juno and Minerva on *sellae* (2.1.2). A *peruigilium* (originally Greek) was an all-night religious festival, normally associated with Dea Dia, Venus, and Ceres (Schmeling 2011: 64). **feminae ... erant:** periphrasis introduces *uariatio* after *matronae* (above).

44.2 non ope humana, non largitionibus principis aut deum placamentis: insistent anaphora of *non* (G-G 963–4), asyndeton, and *enumeratio* underscore the measures’ futility. The three elements (*ope ... largitionibus ... placamentis*) reprise in miniature the preceding narrative (15.43–44.1). Latin has an established word-order whereby *humana ope* denotes positive contexts (6.12.3), but *ope humana* negative or unsuccessful ones (*H.* 4.81.2; Ogilvie 1965: 430–1). T. (*H.* 1.63.2) then Apuleius (*Soc.* 13) adopt *placamentum*, first attested in Pliny the Elder (*HN* 8.187, 21.42), a resonant alternative for *placamen*. **non ... decedebat infamia quin iussum incendium crederetur** ‘the notoriety did not die down [nor prevent] it from being believed that the fire had been started deliberately’ (sc. *iussum* [esse]). In this tricky, elliptical construction, the subordinate clause introduced by *quin* (*OLD* 4) depends on the notion of preventing (negated) in the main clause (G-L §555.1). The abstract noun *infamia* (28× A; cf. *plusque infamiae*, 15.40.2) implies personification, particularly with *decedo* (*OLD* 8a ‘subside’, but suggesting physical movement). Cf. *atris* | ... *uolitans Infamia pennis* (Sil. 15.96–7). **ergo abolendo rumori:** dative gerundive of purpose (4.1n. *tuendae*); caustic *ergo* (34.1n.; 20.4n.). Although the Roman state forcefully suppressing foreign religions has precedents (Beard, North, and Price 1998: 1.230–1), ‘Nero does what may have been traditional, but not for traditional reasons’ (Shannon 2012: 758). **subdidit**

reos ‘he conjured up defendants’ (*OLD subdo* 6a ‘introduce fraudulently’; again with *reus*, 1.6.3, 1.39.3). The verb, elsewhere meaning ‘apply fire underneath’ (*OLD* 1b; e.g. *subdere flammis*, Stat. *Th.* 10.197), grimly foreshadows these defendants becoming human tinder. **quaesitissimis poenis** ‘with the most elaborate punishments’. T. has the rare superlative adjective (*OLD quaesitus* 2) only once more (2.53.3, *quaesitissimis honoribus*; otherwise only *epulae quaesitissimae*, Sall. *H.* 2.70 M). Advance notice of Nero’s perverse creativity prepares readers for the chilling punishment (*et pereuntibus ... urerentur*, 15.44.4). Devising ingenious punishments (*noui generis poenae*, Sen. *De ira* 3.40.4) classically marks stereotypical tyrants: e.g. Darius and Xerxes (Hdt. 4.84, 7.38, Sen. *De ira* 3.16.3–4), Mezentius (Virg. *A.* 8.485–8; cf. Cic. *Hort.* 95 M, *captiuos nouis poenis adfligerent*; Val. Max. 9.2 ext. 10), Tiberius (Suet. *Tib.* 62.2). Roman amphitheatres displayed ‘fatal charades’ involving condemned criminals (Coleman 1990). **quos per flagitia inuisos uulgus Christianos appellabat:** Pliny distinguishes between punishment for bearing the *nomen ipsum* and those *flagitia* associated with the name (*Ep.* 10.96.2). The perceived ‘outrages’ included incest, infanticide, and cannibalism, prompted perhaps by concepts of ‘brotherly love’ and the Eucharist (cf. Athenagoras *Leg.* 3.1, ‘atheism, Thyestean feasts, Oedipodean intercourse’; Wagemakers 2010). Ironically, similar allegations cluster around Nero (14.2, incest; 16.6.1, infanticide; [Sen.] *Oct.* 144, *sanguinis diri sitis*). Druids, Bacchanals, and Jews (*H.* 5.5.2, *inter se nihil illicitum*) faced similar accusations. Later, Tertullian (*Apologeticus* 8) and Minucius Felix (*Octavius* 9–10) both defended Christianity against such charges.

44.3 auctor ... Christus: T.’s explanation suggests that the episode of Christ (‘Anointed One’) and the crucifixion first appears here in the narrative, displaced from its proper chronological setting. Yet since the first hexad is incomplete, certainty is impossible. Pliny simply mentions *Christiani* without explaining the derivation from *Christus* (*Ep.* 10.96.1, late AD 111 / early AD 112). This suggests terminology familiar to contemporaries, but T., considering future audiences, explains clearly in case Christianity lacked staying-power. The name has variant spellings (Edwards 1991): one *Chrestus* (‘Useful’, a common Greek name, usually for slaves or freedmen; Solin 1996: 2.470; Slingerland 1997: 179–201; susceptible to ‘correction’ to *Christus*, Shaw 2015: 80–1) incited riots under Claudius (Suet. *Cl.* 25.4). **per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum:** alliterative phrasing introduces the controversial equestrian Pontius Pilatus (*OCD*³; *RE* 20.1322–3; *PIR*² P815), Judaea’s *praefectus* (AD 26–36; *procurator* is anachronistic), at that time subordinate to the consular governor of Syria. The gospels suggest that Pilatus only reluctantly tried and executed Jesus (Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 18–19). During his

turbulent governorship he dedicated golden shields and introduced Roman military standards (with images) into Jerusalem, funded an aqueduct from the Temple treasury, and suppressed an uprising of Samaritans (Jos. *AJ* 18.55–89; *BJ* 2.169–77; Philo *Leg.* 299–306). He was recalled to Rome for possible disciplinary action, but Tiberius died before his arrival. Later sources suggest that he killed himself (Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 2.7, Orosius *Hist. Pag.* 7.7.5), but this is uncertain (Maier 1971). He (and his wife) inspired much apocryphal literature, including the *Acta Pilati*. **repressaque ... exitiabilis superstitio rursum erumpebat:** 25.2n. *rursum*. Other authors call Christianity a *superstitio* (*OCD*³; Pliny *Ep.* 10.96.8, Suet. *N.* 16.2), T.'s term for various private and foreign cults (11.15.1, 13.32.2). In practice, Roman culture usually tolerated other religions, but the monotheistic Christians' rejection of official Roman religious practices seemed dangerously anti-social. The pattern of temporary repression preceding another 'outbreak' recalls the fire (cf. *finis incendio factus ... rursum grassatus ignis*, 15.40.1). The metaphor of disease is also active (cf. *morbo exitiabili*, 16.5.2; *OLD* *reprimō* 2, *erumpō* 7), likewise in Pliny's letter (*superstitionis istius contagio*, *Ep.* 10.96.9) and Livy describing the Bacchanalia (*ueluti contagio morbi*, 39.9.1). The forceful adjective *exitiabilis* (2× *H.*, 5× *A.*) features 35× in extant Latin (first in Plautus). Velleius also likes it (6×). **non modo per Iudaeam ... sed per urbem etiam:** *origo* = 'source' (*OLD* 3, often for rivers; cf. next note). Similar co-ordinating formulae describe the Catilinarian conspiracy's extensive geographical 'reach' (*non solum per Italiam, uerum etiam transcendit Alpes et ... prouincias occupauit*, Cic. *Cat.* 4.6) and Christianity's extent in Pontus (*neque ciuitates tantum, sed uicos etiam atque agros*, Pliny *Ep.* 10.96.9). **quo cuncta ... confluunt celebranturque:** enveloping alliteration (completed by the compound *confluo*, only here in *A.*, and *celebro*, 'become popular') sharpens *indignatio*, while the slightly pleonastic *cuncta* and *undique* (Lucretian, 6×) suggest scale. Rome's centripetal pull on undesirable peoples and practices (particularly from the east) recurs (Livy 39.6.7–9, Pliny *HN* 33.148–50; *WM* 394). Seneca describes the global influx of peoples to Rome: *ex toto denique orbe terrarum confluxerunt* (*Cons. Helu.* 6.2). Juvenal similarly has the water metaphor (*Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes*, 3.62; cf. 6.295–7). Only here in extant Latin are *atrocia* and *pudenda* (substantives) combined.

44.4 **igitur:** resumptive, 2.1n. **correpti qui<dam> fatebantur** 'after being arrested, some suspects confessed'. The MS reading *qui* suggests confession, *then* arrest. Yet since arrest should logically precede confession, Getty (1966: 287–8) attractively proposed *qui<dam>*, also arguing that *incendium* (not Christianity) is the verb's implied object. **indicio eorum:** Pliny explains that informers (*ab indice nominati*, *Ep.* 10.96.6) and an anonymous *libellus* naming Christians (*Ep.* 10.96.5) facilitated the legal

process. Possibly this evidence was extracted under torture, assuming these were slaves (free-born witnesses could not be tortured): cf. *duae ancillae* tortured during Pliny's investigation (*Ep.* 10.96.8). **multitudo ingens:** Pliny consults Trajan because the scale of the problem in Pontus was escalating (*multi enim omnis aetatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus*, *Ep.* 10.96.9). T. perhaps exaggerates for emotional impact. Cf. Postumius' speech about the Bacchanalia: *crescit et serpit cotidie malum* (Livy 39.16.3). **haud proinde ... quam:** 42.1n. **in crimine incendii quam odio humani generis conuicti:** *conuincō* + preposition *in* (only here in T.) occurs from Cicero onwards: elsewhere T. prefers *conuincō* + genitive (4.31.1, 4.71.4) or infinitive (4.31.3, 13.44.4). The causal ablative *odio* introduces a dependent genitive variously taken as subjective (hatred of the human race towards the Christians) or (more plausibly) objective (hatred of the Christians towards the human race). Similar language describes other misanthropes (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.27, Sen. *Tranq.* 9.15.1, Pliny *HN* 7.80, [Quint.] *Decl. Mai.* 14.7). T. previously criticised Jews for *aduersus omnes alios hostile odium* (*H.* 5.5.1; Cook 2010: 62–5). At stake is stubborn Christian disregard for Roman religious and civic infrastructures, which legal texts call *contumacia* (cf. *inflexibilis obstinatio*, Pliny *Ep.* 10.96.3). Lucian (AD 165) criticises the Christians who 'despise all things equally' (*de Morte Peregrini* 13). Ironically Nero faces similar censure: *spernit superos hominesque simul* ([Sen.] *Oct.* 89). **conuicti sunt:** although *multitudo* has a singular verb 7× in T., he uses the plural again (4.49.3). Synesis (*constructio ad sensum*) with substantives of multitude is common (G-L §211; *omnis multitudo abeunt*, Livy 24.3.15). **pereuntibus addita ludibria:** sc. *sunt*. The prominently placed dative present participle (implying slow death) adds pathos. Elsewhere death (usually suicide) allows *escape* from mockery (Livy *Per.* 40, Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 70.26; cf. Nero committing suicide to avoid a humiliating death, Suet. *N.* 49.2). Posthumous mockery is degrading (cf. Vitellius, *ludibrio*, *H.* 3.84.5; Galba, *plurimis ludibriis uexatum*, *H.* 1.49.1), but at least victims are oblivious. Vitellius' advisers distinguish between death *per ludibrium et contumelias* or *per uirtutem* (*H.* 3.66.4). **ferarum tergis contacti laniatu canum interirent:** those *damnati ad bestias* faced humiliating deaths in the amphitheatre. Various animals delivered these 'fatal charades' (Coleman 1990), particularly bears (Mart. *Spec.* 9.3, 10.1, 24.7, 25.2; Coleman 2006: 87–90). This scenario (Christians wearing 'hides of wild beasts' being lacerated by dogs) evokes the hunter Actaeon transformed into a stag and killed by his dogs (e.g. Ov. *M.* 3.138–252). Alternatively, since the Magi only buried corpses *a feris ... ante laniata* (Cic. *Tusc.* 1.108; Hdt. 1.140 specifies dogs), the punishment perhaps treats the Christians as *magi* (commonly viewed as sorcerers and facing similar penalties to Christians; Sherwin-White 1966: 785). Elsewhere, 'scapedog' puppies participate in purification ceremonies

(περισκυλακισμός, Plut. *Mor.* 280C, *Rom.* 21). T. has *laniatus* once elsewhere, describing tyrants' minds scarred by punishment (6.6.2). **aut crucibus adfixi ac flammandi** 'or attached to crosses and made flammable'. Since M's text is problematic (*aut crucibus adfixi aut flammandi atque*), editors emend variously. Crucifixion, the standard execution for slaves (Cic. *Clu.* 187, Liv. 22.33.2, Val. Max. 8.4.2, Suet. *Dom.* 10.1, SHA *Pert.* 9.10; Garnsey 1970: 126–9; Watson 1987: 129–33), was slow and unspectacular. Therefore Nero innovates. Since arsonists were punished by *crematio*, Nero was advertising the Christians' guilt. *flammandi* indicates the *tunica molesta* (*OLD molestus* 2), combustible clothing for criminals being burnt alive (Sen. *Ep.* 14.5, Mart. 10.25.5, Juv. 8.235) and sometimes gold and purple for visual impact (Plut. *Mor.* 554B). The Neronian poet Lucilius wrote an epigram about Meniscus, burnt alive before spectators, probably for stealing apples from the Golden House's gardens (*Anth. Pal.* 11.184, Coleman 1990: 60–1; cf. Hdt. 1.86, Cyrus' attempted punishment of Croesus, and Dio 67.16, the astrologer Asclepiades). Killing by fire was associated with Carthaginians (Gell. 3.14.19, quoting Cato the Elder [Cugusi fr. 147], Cic. *Fam.* 10.32.3, Sen. *De ira* 3.3.6). **defecisset dies:** *dies* (for *lux*, *OLD* 2a) allows alliteration. 'Fading light', a familiar, dignified metaphor for death (*deficio* can also mean 'die', *OLD* 6), here presages a grotesque end. **in usum nocturni luminis** 'for use as nocturnal illumination'. The mannered periphrasis highlights the human torches' perverse utility. Tigellinus' critics risk similar punishment (Juvenal 1.155, *lucebis*).

44.5 hortos suos: Nero's gardens, previously used altruistically (*hortos quin etiam suos patefecit*, 15.39.2), now display macabre executions which chillingly obliterate that earlier generosity. **ei spectaculo:** crucifixion was more of a deterrent when conducted 'where the greatest number of people can watch and be influenced by this threat' (Quint. *Decl. Min.* 274.13). Phileas, Bishop of Thmuis in the Nile delta (early fourth century), expressed horror at naked disfigured corpses of Christian martyrs being displayed publicly: *crudele cunctis praetereuntibus spectaculum* (Euseb. *HE* 8.10; Coleman 1990: 49). **habitu aurigae permixtus plebi uel curriculo insistens:** emperors with the 'common touch' were often regarded positively, provided that their dignity was uncompromised: 'to save himself from contempt, the monarch must grow a protective shell' (Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 34). Nero goes too far. Alliteration (*permixtus plebi*; *OLD permisceo* 2) enhances *indignatio* (cf. Domitian humiliating Agricola, *turbae seruientium inmixtus*, *Agr.* 40.3). Standing on the chariot increases Nero's visibility (and degradation; cf. the triumphant Flaminius *curribus* ... | *insistens*, Sil. 5.653–4). Even watching charioteers can provoke criticism. So Pliny ridicules people passionate *insistentes curribus homines uidere* (*Ep.* 9.6.2). T. reserves *curriculum* (*OLD* 5; *TLL* s.v. *curriculum* 1505.73–1506.10), a less

common alternative for *currus*, exclusively for Nero (*curriculo quadrigarum insistere*, 14.14.1). **quamquam aduersus sontes** 'although directed at guilty people' (35.3n. *sontem*). The focalisation is probably authorial. By 'guilty' T. probably means their status as Christians, since he strongly implies they were not arsonists. **nouissima exempla meritis** 'deserving the most extraordinary exemplary punishments' (*OLD exemplum* 3b, *nouus* 3). **miseratio:** Nero's aim was 'distancing the onlooker from the criminal and reducing the possibility of a sympathetic attitude towards him on the part of the spectators' (Coleman 1990: 47). Instead the extreme humiliation accentuates the mismatch between crime and punishment: 'the fit between punishment and crime is a vestige of the principle of *talio* that lies behind much of Roman legal thinking' (Coleman 2006: 59). Violent death can stir pity, potentially even for Nero himself: the conspirators speculate about *qui ... Neronem miserarentur* if he is assassinated (15.52.2). **tamquam ... absumerentur:** *tamquam* 'on the grounds that' (*OLD* 7) + subjunctive (common in T.) adds subjective colour, giving the assumed reason for people's pity (G-L §602 n. 4). **non utilitate publica:** causal ablative. The assertion overrides the grim practical utility showcased above (*in usum nocturni luminis*, 15.44.4). **in saeuitiam unius:** similarly Galba denounces Nero's *immanitas* ('inhuman cruelty', *H.* 1.16.2) and Seneca condemns his *saeuitia* (15.62.2), namely 'punishing without reason, simply out of a love of inflicting pain' (Dowling 2006: 206). *unius* isolates Nero from the collective implied by *publica* (also contrasting with *multitudo ingens*, 15.44.4).

45.1 conferendis pecuniis: dative gerundive of purpose (4.1n. *tuendae*). **peruastata ... euersae ... praedam ... spoliatis:** T. accumulates expressive language casting Nero as metaphorically campaigning against his own country (Keitel 1984: 308). The compound *peruasto* (otherwise exclusively Livian, 21x, apart from *SHA Op. Macr.* 14.5), 'useful for expressing the idea of brutal and effective ravaging' (Oakley 1997: 430), features once more (for vengeful Roman military devastation): *quinquaginta milium spatium ferro flammisque peruastat* (1.51.1). *OLD* *euerto* 5 'ruin' (here financially) recalls the military register (*OLD* 4); cf. *Galli euertere potuerunt Romam* (Liv. 5.53.5). **Italia, prouinciae:** the juxtaposition suggests the money-raising's swift centrifugal momentum. Suetonius also shows Nero squeezing the provinces financially after the fire (*N.* 38.3; Dio 62.18.5 casts the fire as merely a pretext). See 18.3n. *grauitate sumptuum* on Nero's finances. **sociique populi et quae ciuitatum liberae uocantur** 'both allied peoples and those of the communities which are called free'. *ciuitates liberae* were privileged communities, sometimes spared direct taxation: 'freedom was a revocable grant, made by the senate or the Princeps, of a charter that fixed the privileges of the community concerned' (Sherwin-