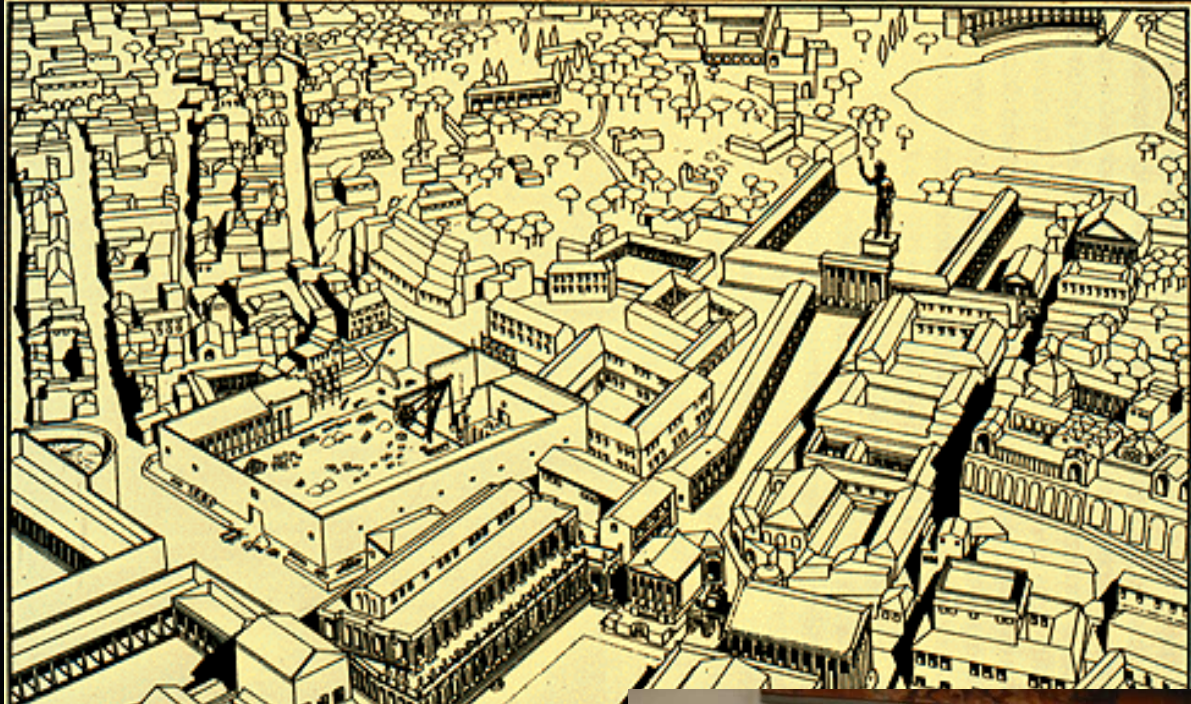
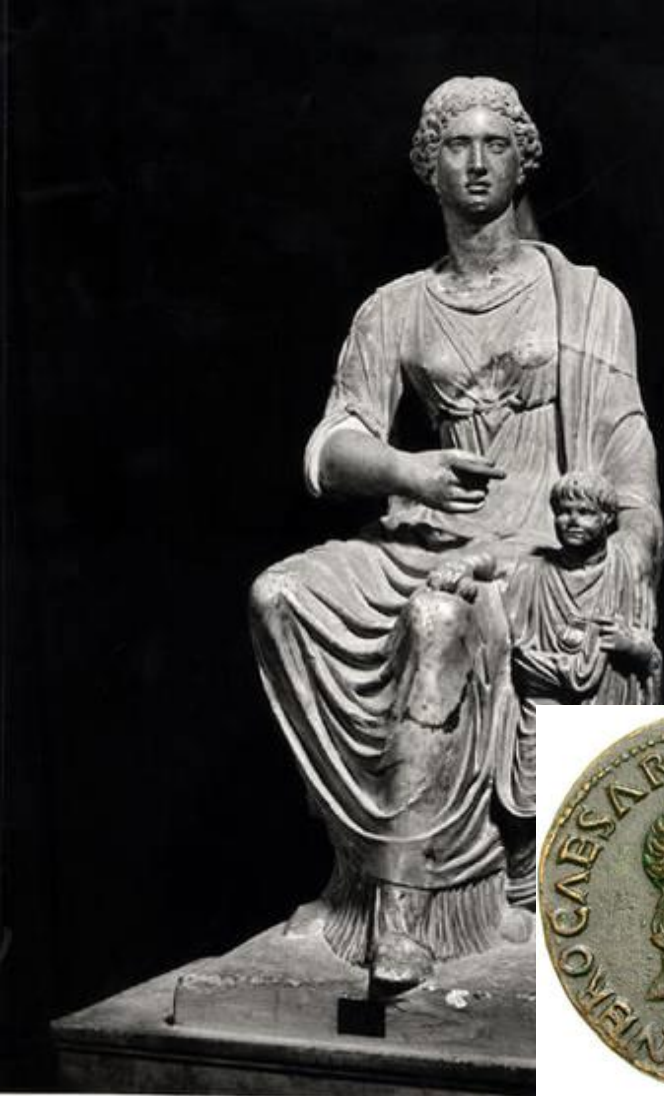




**From Village to Empire. Lecture 22:
Nero and the Year of the Four
Emperors**

Claudius and Nero, adoption AD 50

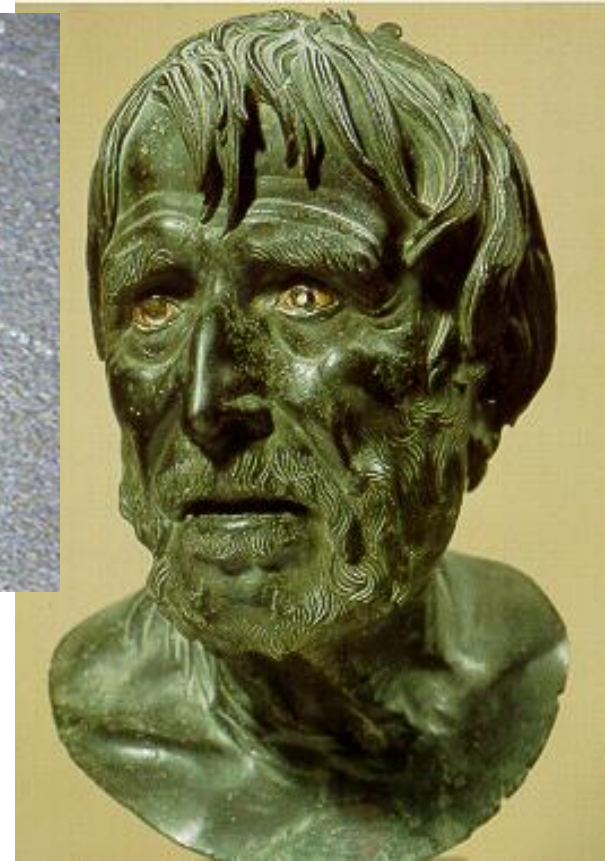


Nero

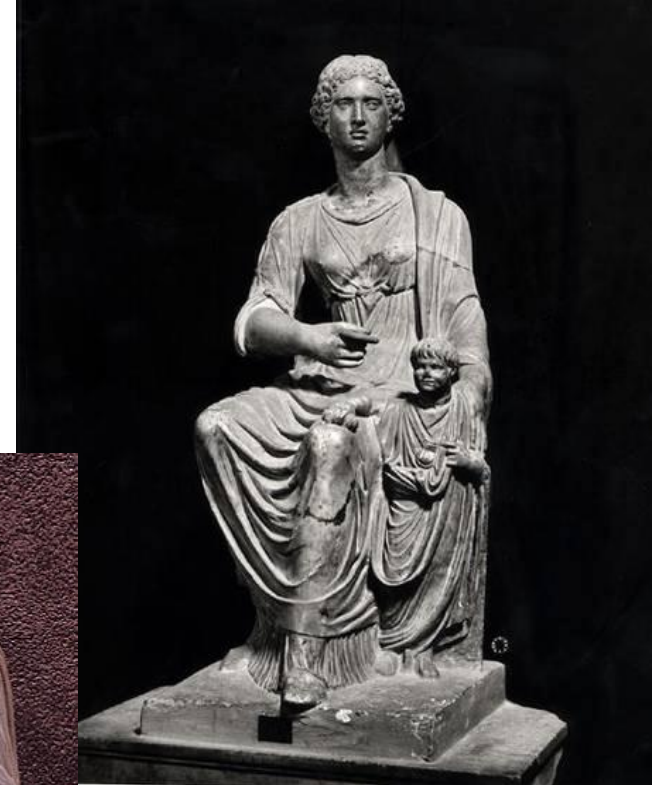
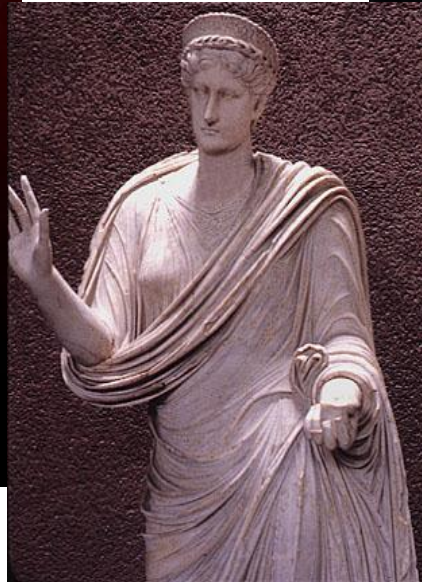
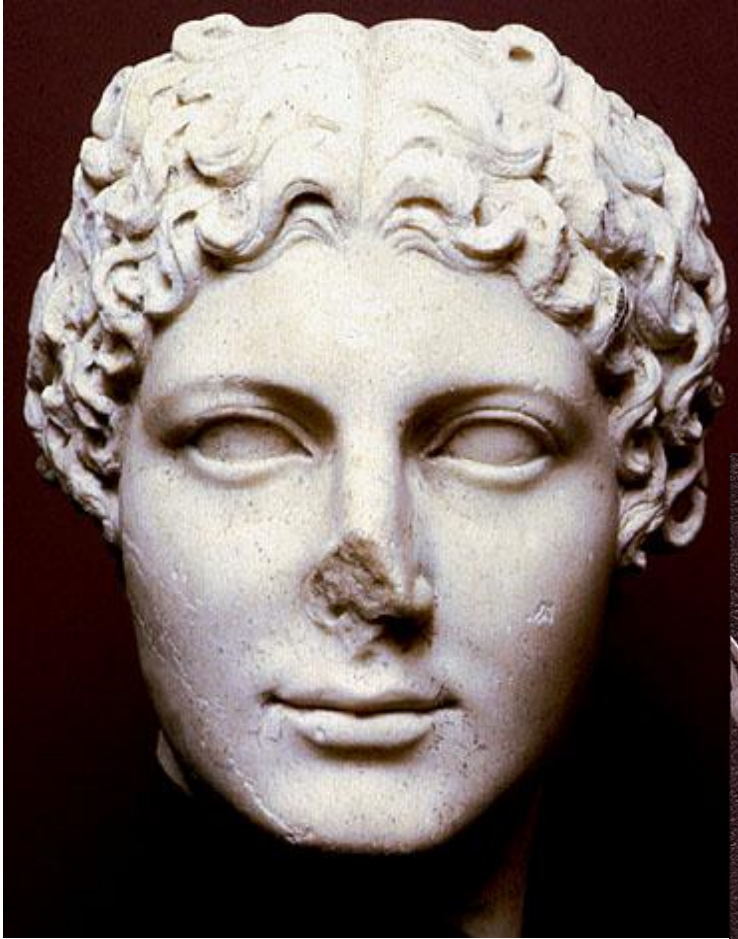
Nero Claudius Caesar
Augustus Germanicus
born **Lucius Domitius**
Ahenobarbus, also called
Nero Claudius Caesar
Drusus Germanicus
(37 – 68 AD)



Agrippina Minor and Seneca

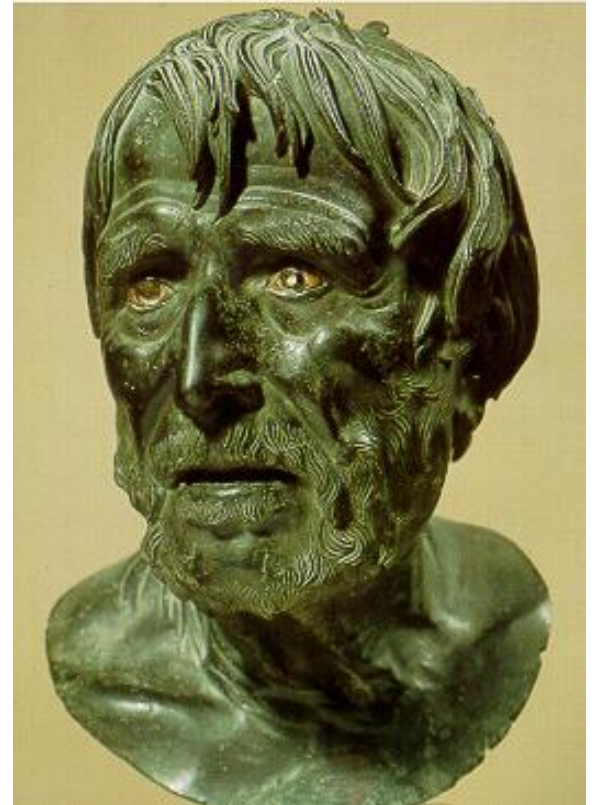


Agrippina the Younger



Seneca

Stoic philosopher and poet from Corduba (Baetica). Equestrian family. Very close to the imperial family. He held relevant positions during Claudius' principate. Exiled in **41** he returned to the court in **49** and becomes praetor thanks to Agrippina, who commissioned him the education of Nero. After Nero's accession in **54**, Seneca exchanged the role of tutor for that of political adviser and minister. As Seneca's authority declined from **59**, he progressively retired from public life. His moral essay. He committed suicide in **65** after being accused of participating in the Pisonian conspiracy against Nero. ***On Clemency*** suggests the way in which Nero was encouraged to behave himself. On the satire ***Apocolocyntosis***, Seneca criticises the deification of Claudius.



Chronology. Main Events

- 37: Birth of L. Domitius Ahenobardus. Son of Cnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, a member of an ancient noble family who was consul in 32. Agrippina, his mother, was the daughter of Germanicus and Julia, and sister of Caligula.
- 49: Agrippina marries Claudius.
- 50: Nero's adoption by Claudius
- 51: Nero accepts the *toga virilis*
- 53: Marriage with Octavia
- 54, 13th October: Nero elected emperor

54. Nero's election as emperor

- Suetonius, *Nero* 9 “Then beginning with a display of filial piety, he gave Claudius a magnificent funeral, spoke his eulogy, and deified him. He paid the highest honours to the memory of his father Domitius. He left to his mother the management of all public and private business. Indeed, on the first day of his rule he gave to the tribune on guard the watchword "The Best of Mothers," and afterwards he often rode with her through the streets in her litter.”

Chronology. Main Events

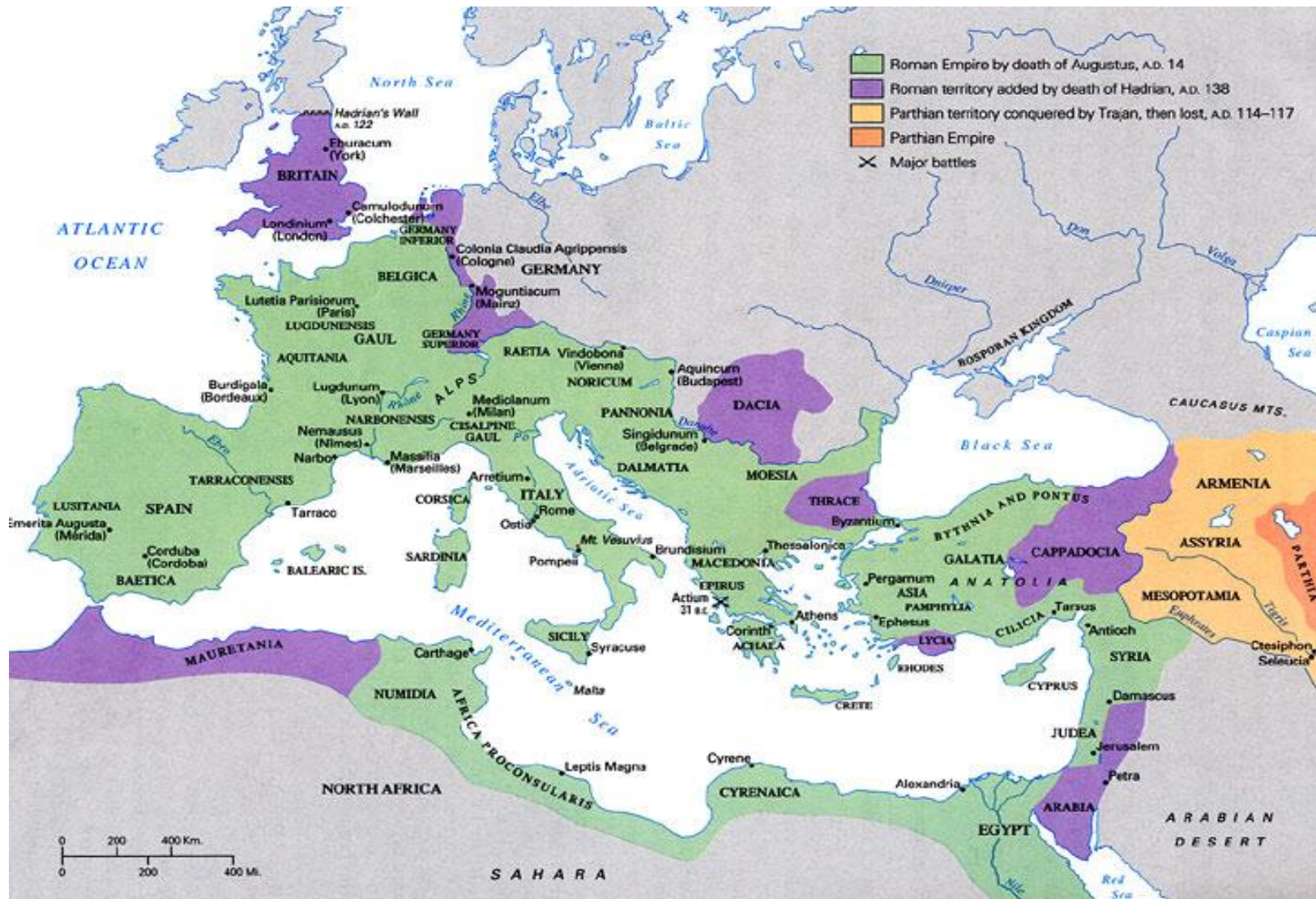
- 55: death of Britannicus. Campaigns against the Parthians in Armenia.
- 56: Seneca becomes consul
- 57: Nero attempts a deep transformation of the fiscal system. New campaigns against the Parthians.
- 58: Nero starts his relationship with Poppaea. The Parthians leave Armenia.
- 59: Nero orders the death of Agrippina. Armenia becomes a client kingdom.

Quinquennium Neronis: 54-59

Aurelius Victor, Liber de Caesaribus 5.2-4

“Although for a long time the young man had exercised absolute rule, for as many years as his stepfather, nevertheless he (i.e. Nero) was of such importance, especially in increasing the city, that **Trajan justifiably said quite often that all emperors were far behind Nero’s *quinquenium* (‘five-year period’).**

The Julio-Claudian and the Provinces



The Parthian conflict. Armenia

Tacitus, Annals 13, 34

- “In the beginning of the year, the war between Parthia and Rome for the possession of Armenia, feebly begun, and till now carried on in dilatory fashion, was taken up with energy ...In addition, the Armenians — whose allegiance was a matter of doubt — were invoking the arms of both powers; though by geographical position and affinity of manners they stood closer to the Parthians, were connected with them by inter-marriage, and, in their ignorance of liberty, were more inclined to accept servitude in that quarter.”

The Parthian conflict and Armenia

- Old rivalry between Parthia and Rome. Disputes concerning the dominion of a vast territory east of Syria and Cappadocia.
- 55-59: campaigns against the Parthians in Armenia.
- Armenia as buffer state and client kingdom of the Romans from 59. Achievements of Cn. Domitius Corbulo, the governor of Syria. The Armenian king Tiridates was crowned by Nero in Rome.

Kingdom of Armenia



Nero's 'autocracy' (60-68)

- Increasing desire of autonomy
- Murder of Agrippina
- Prosecutions for treason
- Institution of the Neronia: the emperor regards himself as a great artist
- Nero styles himself as a living god
- Forced retirement of Seneca after Burrus' death
- Increasing presence of freedmen at the imperial court

Challenges for Nero

- Eastern campaigns
- Budicca's revolt in Britain
- Great fire in Rome in 64. Nero and the City of Rome
- Rise of Christianity
- Jewish revolt
- Growing hostility of the Senate
- Conspiracy of the Pisones

Chronology of Events

- **60-61:** conflicts in Britain. Fightings against the against the Silures and the Ordovices. Rebellion of Boudicca (or Boadicea), the queen of the Iceni.
- **62:** Death of Burrus. Tigellinus becomes praetorian prefect. Nero divorces Octavia and marries Poppaea Sabina.

Boudicca and the Iceni



The rebellion of Boudicca

- The kingdom of the Iceni was left half to the Roman empire and half to Boudicca by her father Prasutagus. Yet Roman law did not recognise a royal inheritance to be passed to a woman. The will was ignored and the Romans proceeded to take over the entire kingdom.
- The rebels attacked and conquered the Roman colonies of Camulodunum (now Colchester) , London and Verulamium (now St. Albans).
- The Roman troops reacted and commanded by Gaius Suetonius Paulinus attacked the Brittons in the south
- Tacitus describes the events

The rebellion of Boudicca according to Tacitus, Annals Book XIV

- “Boudicea, with her daughters before her in a chariot, went up to tribe after tribe, protesting that it was indeed usual for Britons to fight under the leadership of women. "But now," she said, "it is not as a woman descended from noble ancestry, but as one of the people that I am avenging lost freedom, my scourged body, the outraged chastity of my daughters. Roman lust has gone so far that not our very persons, nor even age or virginity, are left unpolluted. But heaven is on the side of a righteous vengeance.”

Nero and Poppaea Sabina



Nero and the city of Rome



Nero as public builder in rome



Nero and the Fire of Rome. 64AD

- The historian **Suetonius** describes Nero from the tower of Maecenas' gardens, watching as the fire consumed Rome.
- **Cassius Dio** tells us how he *"climbed on to the palace roof, from which there was the best overall view of the greater part of the fire and, and sang 'The capture of Troy'"*
- Meanwhile **Tacitus** wrote; *"At the very time that Rome burned, he mounted his private stage and, reflecting present disasters in ancient calamities, sang about the destruction of Troy"*.
*But Tacitus also takes care to point out that this story was a rumour, not the account of an eye witness.

The Consequences of the Fire: Nero's building activity

- **Tacitus, Annals 15, 42.** “However, Nero turned to account the ruins of his fatherland by building a palace, the marvels of which were to consist not so much in gems and gold, materials long familiar and vulgarized by luxury, as in fields and lakes and the air of solitude given by wooded ground alternating with clear tracts and open landscapes... They (architects) had undertaken to sink a navigable canal running from Lake Avernus to the mouths of the Tiber along a desolate shore or through intervening hills; for the one district along the route moist enough to yield a supply of water is the Pomptine Marsh; the rest being cliff and sand, which could be cut through, if at all, only by intolerable exertions for which no sufficient motive existed. None the less, Nero, with his passion for the incredible, made an effort to tunnel the height nearest the Avernus, and some evidences of that futile ambition survive.”

The crisis of 68

- Revolt of Julius Vindex (Governor of Gallia Lugdonensis)
- Galba, governor of Hispania Tarraconensis, proclaims himself emperor
- The Senate and the praetorian guard switch sides
- Nero is compelled to commit suicide
- 69: Galba is killed by Otho.
- Otho defeated by Vitellius in Cremona
- Vespasian acclaimed Emperor in Judea

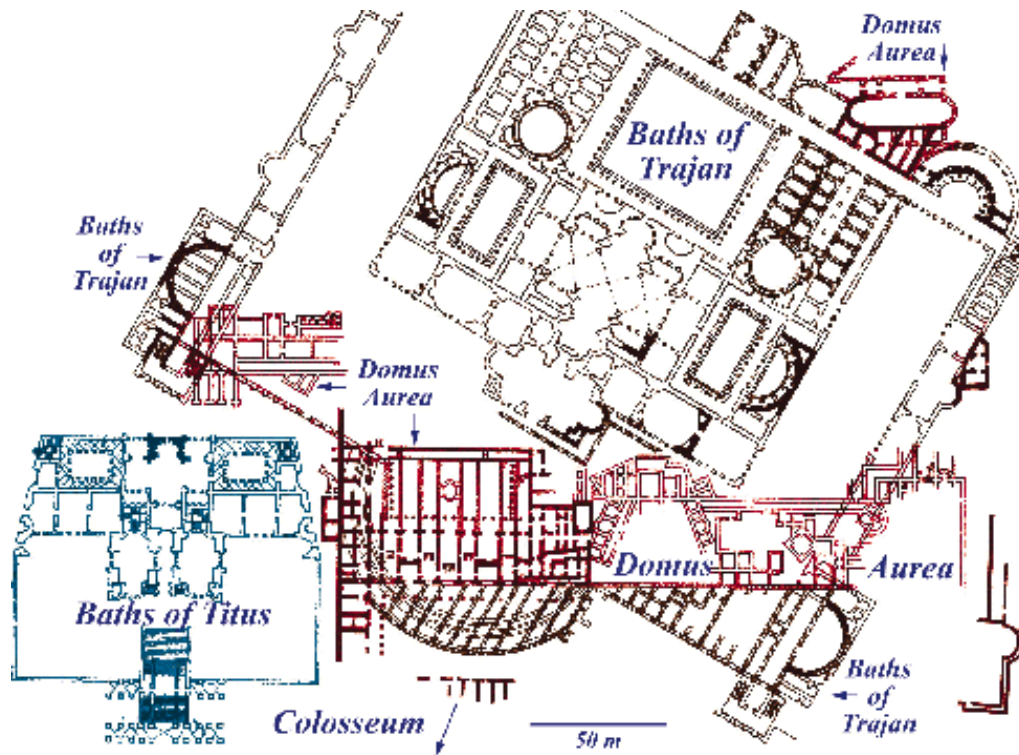
A Civil War among parts of the Roman army

- Galba's supporters: praetorian guard, Italian and Spanish legions
- Otho's supporters: Galba's former supporters
- Vitellius: German and Gallic legions
- Vespasian: Syrian legions, Danubian legions; at a later stage, many of Otho's supporters join Vespasian

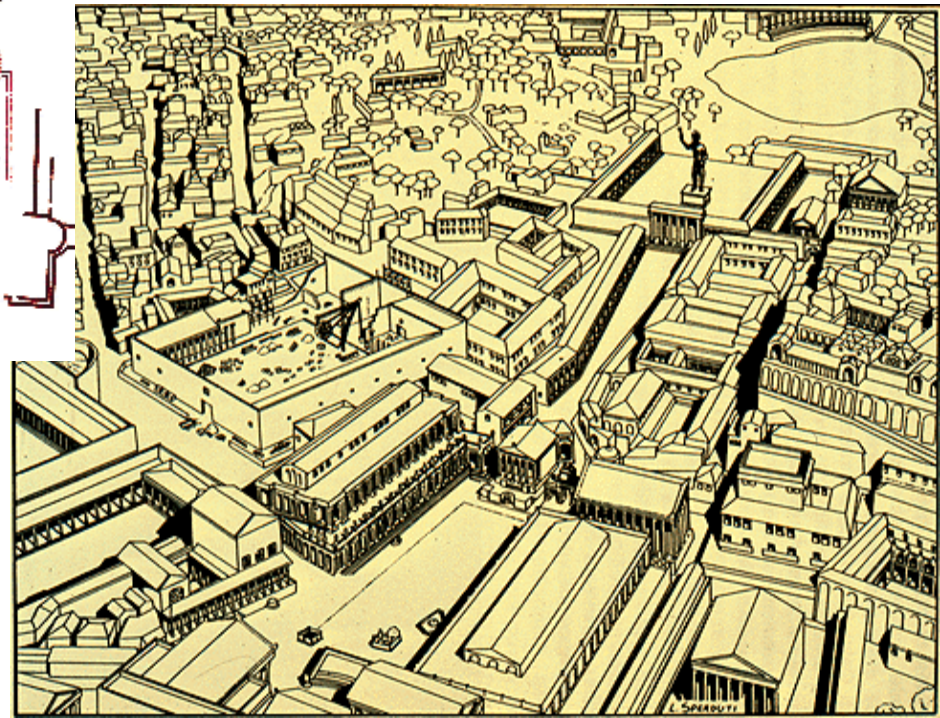
Nero's Golden House

- The *Domus Aurea* was a large landscaped portico villa, designed to take advantage of artificially created landscapes built in the heart of Rome by the Emperor Nero after the Great Fire of Rome (64 AD) cleared away the aristocratic dwellings on the slopes of the Esquiline Hill.

Domus Aurea



Suetonius on the Domus Aurea: *rus in urbe*, "countryside in the city"



Domus Aurea



Domus Aurea



The reception of the Domus Aurea

Suetonius, Nero, 39:

- "While our ruler his lyre doth twang and the Parthian his bowstring, Paeon-singer our prince shall be, and Far-darter our foe."
- "Rome is becoming one house; off with you to Veii, Quirites!
- If that house does not soon seize upon Veii as well."

The Domus Aurea according to Pliny

Pliny the Elder, Natural History 36, 24, 111: “But there are still two other mansions by which all these edifices have been eclipsed. Twice have we seen the whole City environed by the palaces of the Emperors Caius and Nero; that of the last, that nothing might be wanting to its magnificence, being coated with gold. Surely such palaces as these must have been intended for the abode of those who created this mighty empire, and who left the plough or their native hearth to go forth to conquer nations, and to return laden with triumphs! men, in fact, whose very fields even occupied less space than the audience-chambers of these palaces. Indeed, one cannot but help reflecting how trifling a portion of these palaces was equal to the sites which the republic granted to its invincible generals, for the erection of their dwellings.”

The Freedom of Achaia.Speech of Nero (Boeotia AD 67) Marble stele

For you, men of Greece, it is an unexpected gift which, / even though nothing from my generous nature is / un hoped-for, I grant to you, as great gift as you would be un/able to request. All Greeks inhabiting Achaia and what is / now known as the Peloponnesus, / receive freedom with no taxation! A thing which none of you ever possessed in your most for/tunate of times, / for you were subject to others or to yourselves...”

Vindex

Vindex, denarius. AD 68. SALVS GENERIS
HVMANIS, Victory with wreath and palm, left on
globe. SPQR in wreath.



Galba

- Galba AV Aureus. Uncertain Spanish mint, possibly Tarraco. GALBA IMPERATOR, laureate head right / ROMA RENASCENS, Roma standing right, holding Victory on globe & transverse spear. Cohen 195ff.



Otho

Otho Denarius. IMP M OTHO CAESAR AVG TR P,
bare head right / PAX ORBIS TERRARVM, Pax
standing left with branch & caduceus. RSC 3.

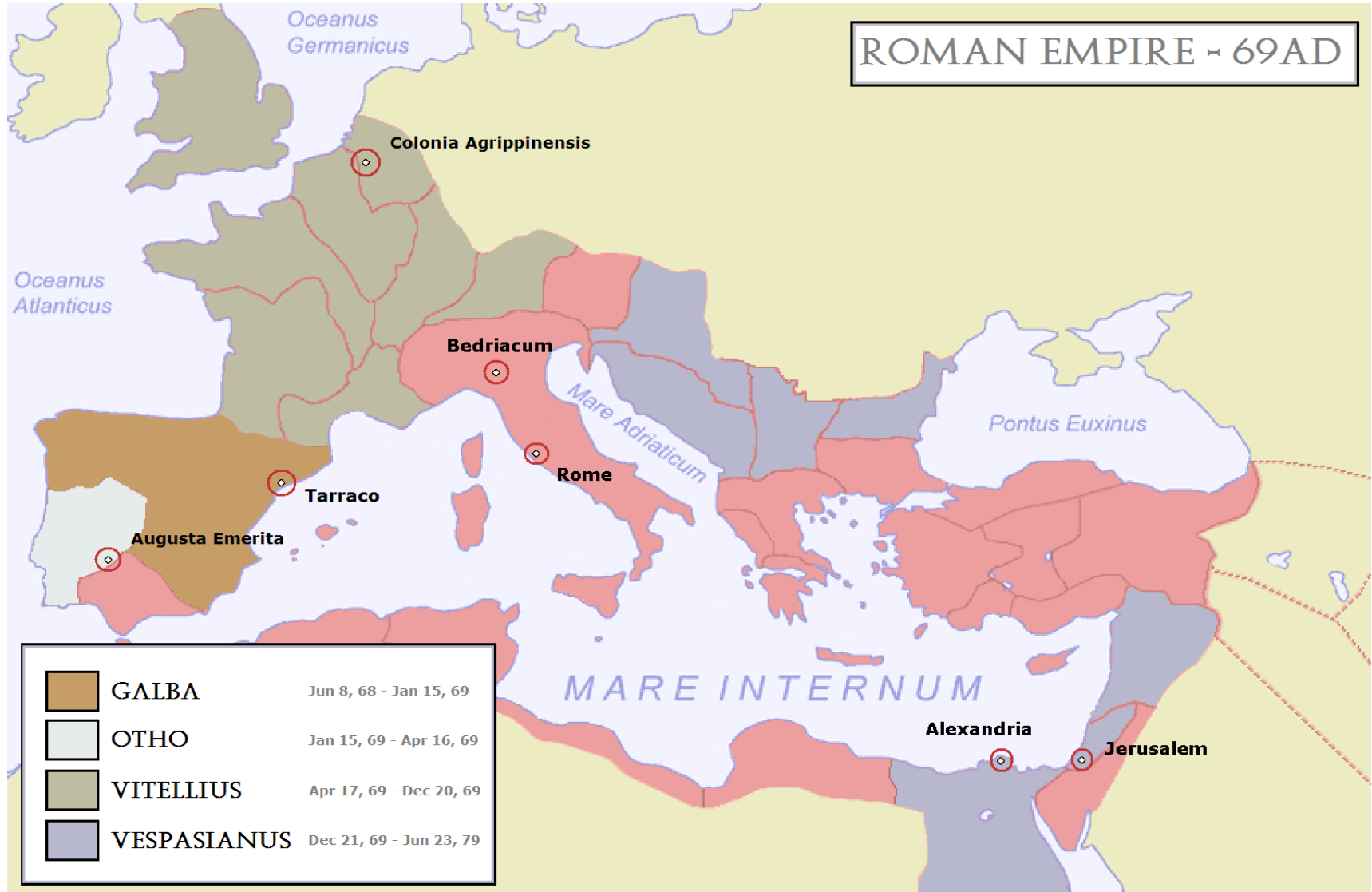


Vitellius

Vitellius Denarius. Tarraco mint. A VITELLIVS IMP GERMAN, laureate head right; globe at point of bust / FIDES EXERCITVVM, clasped hands. RSC 31.



AD 69



Nero's suicide. Cassius Dio 63.29.2

- **29** “While he was in this plight the Roman people were offering sacrifices and going wild with delight. Some even wore liberty caps, signifying that they had now become free. And they voted to Galba the prerogatives pertaining to the imperial office. For Nero himself they instituted a search in all directions and for some time were at a loss to know where he could have betaken himself. When they finally learned, they sent horsemen against him. **2** He, then, perceiving that they were drawing near, commanded his companions to kill him. And when they refused, he uttered a groan and said: "I alone have neither friend nor foe." By this time the horsemen were close at hand, and so he killed himself, after uttering that oft-quoted remark: "Jupiter, what an artist perishes in me!" And as he lingered in his agony, Epaphroditus dealt him the finishing stroke.”

The Year of the Four Emperors

- The secrets of the imperial power were for the first time unveiled by the unsuccessful revolt of **Vindex**, Governor of Gallia Lugdonensis) against **Nero** in 68 AD. His example was followed by **Galba** (Governor of Hispania Tarraconensis), who marched to Rome after provoking Nero's suicide. His power was also ephemeral, being murdered in 69 by **Otho**, his former lieutenant, who was going himself to be defeated by the German legions of **Vitellius** at the Battle of Cremona. In the meantime, **Vespasian** was acclaimed emperor by his troops in Judea and Alexandria, where he first took control of the grain supply to Rome. He left his supporters in Rome to rule on his behalf until he finally entered the capital in autumn of AD 70.

The arcana imperii

- Tacitus, Histories 1, 4:
“An Emperor could be created elsewhere than at Rome”
- Rome and Italy were no longer the centre of the Imperial power. Why?
- Importance of the provincial power and the control over the resources (metal, grain,...)