

Emma Brandel

*Motherhood and the Julio-Claudians: Maternal Power in Early Imperial Rome*

The Julio-Claudian dynasty of the Roman Empire gave history some of its most infamous ancient women. These famous figures, from Livia Drusilla, the wife of the Emperor Augustus, to Agrippina the Younger, the mother of the Emperor Nero, reflect the views and roles of women during the period. What is most fascinating about these women are their roles as mothers to their children; the succession of the Julio-Claudian empire relied heavily on maternal lineages leading back to Augustus, and these women often took advantage of this fact to wield political power. To examine the roles of mothers in the Early Roman Empire, we must look at the most prolific and powerful mothers of the Imperial Family: Livia Drusilla, Julia the Elder, Antonia Minor, and Agrippina the Younger, and how they used their mother status to gain, wield, and retain political power. The power these women wielded was also recorded by historians of their time, and these images were passed down to the modern day. Given the deeply patriarchal culture these women came from, we must attempt to determine whether certain depictions of them are accurate, how propaganda and political strife have influenced our modern view of them, and whether any of this matters at all to the larger discussion of motherhood in the early empire.

Emma Brandel is a current student at Chapman University pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Ancient Cultures and Languages. Emma is also pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Music with a Vocal Emphasis, and is currently beginning the process of writing a Senior Thesis on the Music of Ancient Greece. She plans to attend graduate school and pursue a PhD in Classics