Romans who 'love' too much: Femicide in Imperial Rome

*Martina Garibotti**

Abstract: this study explores the phenomenon of femicide in Imperial Rome, analyzing whether the modern definition of femicide can be applied to documented cases from the first two centuries AD. Femicide is defined as the intentional or pre-intentional murder of a woman motivated by sexist attitudes or structural gender-based violence. By focusing on the Imperial period, this research leverages the relative stability of available sources compared to earlier periods, where historiographical accounts are often sparse or ideologically compromised. The analysis begins by distinguishing cases of femicide from other forms of homicide involving female victims, particularly those motivated by political or non-gender-related factors. Legal sources, such as the *lex Cornelia de sicariis* and the *lex Pompeia de Parricidiis*, provide a foundation for understanding how Roman law approached the murder of free women, while literary and epigraphic sources offer insight into cultural and social attitudes toward gender-based violence. Key cases discussed include Pontia Postumina and Appia Annia Regilla, where obsessive control and brutal violence align closely with modern definitions of femicide. Other cases, such as Claudia Octavia, Claudia Antonia, and Poppaea Sabina, illustrate the intersection of personal, political, and gendered motives, though their classification as femicide remains complex. Epigraphic evidence, though limited, reveals patterns of domestic violence. The findings suggest that while some cases reflect clear elements of femicide, others highlight the inherent difficulty of applying modern concepts to historical contexts. Nonetheless, these episodes expose the deep roots of gender-based violence in Roman society, where legal and moral standards often legitimized or minimized such acts. This research underscores the importance of critically examining historical sources to better understand the systemic nature of violence against women in antiquity.

Keywords: Femicide, Gender-based violence, Domestic violence, Imperial Rome, Women in antiquity, Uxoricide, Violence against women in history.

Introduction

The neologism *femicide*[1] refers to cases of murder – whether malicious or preter-intentional – in which a male individual kills a female individual due to sexist attitudes and behaviors. Based on

* I wish to express my gratitude to Professors Alfredo Buonopane, Riccardo Bertolazzi, and Lorenzo Boragno for their careful review and invaluable advice during the preparation of this work. I would also like to thank the reviewers for their helpful suggestions, which have greatly contributed to improving the article. Any errors that remain are solely my own responsibility.

[1]The killing of a woman (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "femicide" (n.1)."Femicide" is a scholarly entry composed of "female" and the theme of *caedere*, "to kill", along the lines of "infanticide" (*Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, s.v. Femminicidio"). Its use has been attested in Anglo-speaking culture since the early 19th century, although at the time it was used generically to indicate cases of murder in which women were victims (Russell, Harmes 2001, 13). The term, has recently gained social relevance by attracting the media's attention, although it spread in the Italian language from 2008 onwards (Merli 2015, 445).

this definition, femicide constitutes a subset of all homicides involving female victims[2]. Indeed, the gendered connotation of the term emerged in the second half of the 20th century, during the development of the criminological category of femicide. This connotation distinguishes homicides of women due to accidental or incidental reasons from those motivated by gender or resulting from other forms of gender-based violence and discrimination[3].

Recently, this subject has become a focus of debate across psychological, legal, criminological, sociological, anthropological, and historical fields[4].

Considering this focus, the present study aims to evaluate whether the modern concept of femicide can be applied to the killings of women documented during the first two centuries of the Roman Empire. The choice to focus on the Imperial period is driven by the relative stability of the available sources, which, although limited, offer a more consistent framework compared to earlier periods. By contrast, historiographical documentation from earlier times is not only sparse but often compromised by ideological biases and romanticized details that undermine its reliability.

Indeed, isolated instances of women being murdered can be found throughout Roman history, dating back to its earliest periods. For example, Horatia, the sister of the Roman triplets who fought the Alban *Curiatii,* was executed by her brother with their father's consent. Her crime was mourning one of the *Curiatii* to whom she had been betrothed, an act interpreted as unpatriotic[5]. However, such stories are deeply interwoven with legendary and ideological elements and stem from a period when Roman law had yet to be codified [6].

Moreover, by definition, the murder of a woman that is not motivated by structural or systemic gender-based violence cannot be classified as femicide. For the sake of methodological clarity and focus, this study excludes cases where the killing of a woman is evidently tied to factors that transcend gender. For instance, inscriptions that document murders associated with robberies fall outside the scope of this analysis [7]. Similarly, the murder of an enslaved woman cannot be

[2] Paoli 2013 examines the introduction of the comprehensive neologism *femminicidio* (femicide) into Italian, as well as other neolatin languages. The study also addresses the reasons why alternative terms, deemed too restrictive, were rejected. For example, the term *uxoricidio* (uxoricide) limits its scope to wives as victims, even though femicide encompasses a broader range of victims, including women who are not spouses or cohabitants, and perpetrators who are not exclusively husbands or domestic partners. Similarly, terms like *mulierícidio* (mulierícide) exclude girls and adolescents from the category of victims. They also fail to highlight the gendered nature of the violence, which is central to the term "femicide".

[3] Radford, Russell 1992, 15.

[4] For a general framing of the phenomenon from a legal, criminological, and anthropological perspective and a clarification of the meaning and contexts of the relationship between gender-based violence and criminal law: Merli 2015, 430-468. On the international protection systems of women's human rights and the ongoing worldwide debate on femicide: Spinelli 2006.

[5] Liv. *Hist.* 1.25-26; Dion. Hal. 3.12-22. For a commentary on these sources, see Calabrese 2018, 73-82.

[6] Horatia, as well as Lucretia and Virginia, is defined as an 'exemplary woman' in the context of didactic stories that were used to introduce females to the behavior they were supposed to adopt (Cantarella 2003, pp. 54-55). It is precisely in this connotation that these stories should be considered. While these stories cannot be accepted as historically accurate or factual, they are representative of the situation and context prevailing at the time of the writing of the facts. They can prove to be a valuable key to interpretation. It should also be noted that the story of Horatia is not unique in the historiography devoted to monarchic and early republican Rome. Sources report that the wife of *Aegatius Maecenius* was bludgeoned to death because she was guilty of having swallowed wine (Val. Max. 6.3.9; Plin. *Nat.* 14.13.89; Tert. *Apol.* 6.4) and that a midwife was starved to death because she was found guilty of having broken the seal of the box where the cellar keys were kept (Plin. *Nat.* 13.13.90; Tert. *Apol.* 6.4). On the specific subject of women and the ban on drinking wine: Durry 1955, 108-113.

[7] From Salona (*Dalmatia*), the epigraph of a ten-year-old girl killed because of the jewelry she wore: *D(is) M(anibus), / Iul(iae) Res/tutae in/felicissi/mae inter/fectae / annor(um) / X, caus(a) or/namentor(um). Iul(ius) / Restut(us) et / Statia Puden/till(a) parent(es). CIL* III, 2399; *AE* 2003, 1281; *AE* 2013, 85. From Zagaia (*Drobeta*), a woman belonging to a

considered femicide if the act of violence is not driven by motives that align with the definition of this category. In such cases, the enslaved individual would need to have been killed specifically because she was a woman, rather than as a person subject to *dominica potestas*, a status that applies regardless of gender[8].

Finally, this study excludes cases of women's murders with an explicitly political motive, as they do not fit the parameters of femicide as previously defined. Particularly, cases where the sources clearly emphasise the political nature of these events and – although gender-related motivations may have played a role – the evidence does not support this interpretation without speculative assumptions. For example, certain female murders within the *Domus Augusta* in the 1st century CE, such as that of Valeria Messalina, wife of Emperor Claudius, reflect this dynamic.

Indeed, In the case of Messalina, although the sources frequently emphasize her allegedly immoral behavior[9], this does not appear to be a decisive factor in explaining the decision to execute her in 48 AD[10]. Her assassination, commissioned by the imperial freedman Narcissus and presented as an order from Emperor Claudius[11], followed her marriage to her lover Gaius Silius while Claudius was in Ostia[12]. However, the sources clearly indicate that the motive cannot be attributed to personal reasons, as neither her marital betrayal nor her moral conduct were decisive. Instead, the marriage to Silius was interpreted not as a personal act but as a political maneuver. The sources explicitly state that the order for Messalina's execution arose from the fear that her union with Silius concealed a political conspiracy aimed at overthrowing Claudius[13]. Indeed, this fear justified not only the execution of Messalina but also that of Silius and numerous others implicated in the alleged plot[14]. The reason for excluding this case from the study does not lie in the actual existence

noble Dacian family, killed at the hands of some *latrones*: [---] *interfecta a latro(nibus) / et vindicata. / Ulcudius Baedari / et Sutta Epicadi, / p(arentes), p(ientissimae) fil(iae) tit(ulum) p(osuerunt). / D(is) I(nferis) M(anibus) Ulcudius / B(ae)dari v(i)xi(t) an(nos) L. CIL* III, 1585 = 8021= *IDR* II, 134; PETRACCIA 2007, 1144. From Rome a *carmen*, dedicated by the torn husband to his wife: *Quicumque legis titulum, iuvenis quoi sua carast, / auro parce nimis vincire lacertos, / illa licet collo laqueatos inliget artus / et roget ut meritis praemia digna ferat; // Vestitu indulge, splendentem supprime cultum: / sic praedo hinc aberit neq(ue) adulter erit / nam draco consumpsit domina speciosus abartus / infixumq(ue) viro Volnus perpetuumq(ue) dedit. CIL* VI 5302 = *CLE* 1037; PLESSIS 1905, 169-171; CERVELLI, 1971, 43-47; ZANASI 1999, 155; CUGUSI 2007, 117.

[8] In Tac. *Ann.* 1.10.5, Cass. Dio. 54.23.1-5; Sen. *De Ira* 3.40 it is reported that a certain Publius Vedius Pollio, a wealthy knight who lived in the Augustan age, habitually punished his slaves by feeding them to the fish in his aquarium. In Mart. 2. 66 there is a story of a slave girl whipped by her mistress for a futile reason. Other examples of enslaved people killed in fits of violence in Suet. *Nero.* 5.1 and SHA, *Tyr. trig.* 22.3. Similar cases perpetrated by masters on female slaves cannot be considered femicides. For the use of violence against slaves, see LENSKI 2016, 275-298.

[9] Messalina has gone down in history as the *meretrix Augusta* (imperial prostitute) due to the portrayals of her by Suetonius, Tacitus, Cassius Dio, and Juvenal. On this topic, see, among others, QUESTA 1995 and 1998. For further reading on Messalina, refer to the recent monograph by CENERINI 2024.

[10] The events leading to Messalina's murder and the circumstances of the murder itself are narrated in Tac. *Ann.* 11.26-38; Suet. *Claud.* 26; Cass. Dio. 60.1.

[11] According to Tac. *Ann.* 11.37. 2, Narcissus ordered Messalina's execution out of concern that Claudius might forgive her.

[12] The legitimacy of the marriage between Silius and Messalina has evidently sparked a legal debate. See, for example, GUARINO 1974 and ROBLEDA 1976 and 1982.

[13] Indeed, in Tac. *Ann.* 11.30-31 is noted that had Claudius failed to act, Silius would have taken control of Rome. Tacitus also highlights Claudius's constant anxiety, as he repeatedly asked whether he still held power over the empire. Similarly, Suet. *Claud.* 36 explicitly states that Claudius feared Messalina intended to bestow the empire upon her lover, Silius. Cass. Dio. 60.31.5 further emphasizes Claudius's terror at the possibility that Messalina might attempt to kill him and replace him with Silius.

[14] In fact, in addition to Silius, several others were executed, including Titius Proculus, Vettius Valens (the court physician), Pompeius Urbicus, Saufeius Trogus, Decius Calpurnianus (the prefect of the city watch), Sulpicius Rufus (the *procurator* of the gladiatorial school), and the senator Junius Vergilianus (cfr. Tac., *Ann.* 11.35).

of a concrete conspiracy – a matter that remains open to debate[15] – but rather in the fact that scholars widely agree, based on the interpretation of the sources, that this episode constitutes a political assassination rather than a personal one. Such a motive does not fall within the parameters of femicide as previously defined. A similar argument can be made regarding the assassination of Agrippina the Younger[16].

So, to investigate the presence of murders comparable to femicide, as previously defined, in Imperial Rome, I will first present a series of legal sources regulating the murder of women. These are essential for understanding Roman attitudes toward this issue. Following this, I will examine literary and epigraphic sources that might reference cases of femicide.

The cases discussed in this study differ from those excluded because the sources suggest, or reasonably allow us to infer, a personal motive potentially linked to the victim's gender. Although some of these cases, like those excluded, involve individuals at the highest levels of imperial politics – occasionally even within the *Domus Augusta* – the evidence for a political motive is not explicit enough to dismiss entirely the possibility of personal or gender-related dynamics.

For this reason, unlike the excluded cases, these episodes require a thorough analysis of the sources and their historical context. This approach aims to clarify the underlying dynamics and determine whether these incidents can be classified as femicide or should be interpreted differently.

THE LAWS REGULATING THE MURDER OF A WOMAN

The case-law governing the murder of a free woman during the first centuries of the empire lays its foundation in late republican legislation, and it is subject to many problems of interpretation[17]. In 81 BC, at Sulla's initiative, the *lex Cornelia Sullæ de sicariis et veneficis*[18] was introduced into Roman law to reform the legislation on *crimen homicidii*. The punishment inflicted on the offender under this law was *interdictio aqua et igni*[19]. Although Marcian specifies that there were differences in its implementation during the Severan age[20], *humiliores* were sentenced to the *damnatio ad bestias*[21],

[15] For a comprehensive *analysis* on the matter, see CENERINI 2024, 122-142 along with the previous bibliography referenced therein.

[16] For an analysis of the events and reasons behind the assassination of Agrippina the Younger, see the *status quaestionis* presented in CENERINI 2009, 66-73, along with the previous bibliography cited therein.

[17] In terms of jurisprudence, this article intends to refrain from engaging in the intricate discourse among legal scholars. The objective of this section is to present an overview of potential ramifications stemming from the homicide of a woman within the Principality, contingent upon her legal standing.

[18] By the end of the Republic, the problem became so urgent that Cic. *Nat. Deor*. 3.74 called the *quaestiones de sicae et veneni* habitual. The *lex Cornelia Sullæ de sicariis et veneficis,* illustrated by Marc. *Inst. lib.* 14 (*Dig.* 48.8. 1; *Inst*. 4.18.5), explicitly punished, in addition to murder and attempted murder, the individual who prepared, sold, bought, possessed or administered a *venenum malum necandi hominis causa*, voluntary abortion, castration and circumcision, the individual who set arson fires and the individual who, by false deposition, determined a death sentence (DEL GIUDICE, BELTRANI 1995, 310). For *lex* studies specifically, see FERRARY 1991, 417-434.

[19] *Interdictio aqua et igni* appeared in Roman criminal law as early as the laws of the XII Tables (*Tab.* IX, 4.) with reference to serious crimes. The punishment consisted of forced and definitive removal from the Roman territory. The convicted, therefore, could no longer return to their homeland: since they could not regain legal subjectivity, if they did so they ran the risk of being attacked by any citizen with impunity (DEL GIUDICE, BELTRANI 1995, 257).

[20] Marc. *Inst. lib.* 14 (*Dig*. 48.8.3.5): «*Legis Corneliae de sicariis et veneficis poena insulae deportatio est, et omnium honorum ademtio; sed solent hodie capite puniri, nisi honestiore loco positi fuerint, ut poenam legis sustineant; humiliores enim solent vel bestiis subiici, altiores vero deportantur in insulam*». See *Coll*. 1.2.1-2.

[21] According to Paul. *Sent*. 5.23.1 the *humiliores* could alternatively have been sentenced to crucifixion.

while *honestiores* were sentenced to the *deportatio in insulam*[22]. The case of killing one's relatives (*parricidium*), which is punished with the *pœna cullei*[23], was outside the scope of the law until the enactment of the *lex Pompeia de Parricidiis*[24]. This law – probably promulgated in 55 BC and preserved with some modifications by imperial legislation – established the punishment for murderers of relatives, for whom it provided *interdictio aqua et igni.*

A vast legal literature discusses which types of kinship ties falling under the law in case of murder. Among others, the subject of discussion is the presence of uxoricide in the crimes of patricide[25]. The term *uxor* may have been added later in Marcian's list[26]. According to some jurists, it would have made no sense to introduce the murder of the wife into the list since[27], at the time of the law's promulgation, *cum manu*[28] was still the most common form of marriage. Marcian seems to indicate that the legislation of the murder of the wife – as well as that of the husband-should be traced back to the lex *Cornelia Sullæ de sicariis et veneficis*[29]. The Justinian compilers may have made the addition. They probably chose this solution since they could not explain the in-laws' presence and the spouses' absence[30]. Consequently, the *lex Pompeia* regulated the murder of a woman related to the perpetrator by kinship, with the exception of daughters[31] and spouses. In the latter case murders would be punished by the *Lex Cornelia*, along with that of a freeborn woman with no family ties to the murderer[32].

The way in which the murder of a female slave was regulated is different, in that two possible cases may exist: the murder is perpetrated by the master or by someone other than the master.

[22] Pavón Torrejón 2011, 259.

[23] The original punishment consisted of putting the offender in a leather sack along with a viper, a dog, a rooster, and a monkey and then throwing him into the Tiber. On the subject of the *pœna cullei* Cantarella 1991, 264-308.

[24] The text of the law is known only through the jurisprudential tradition: Ven. Sat. *de iud. Publ.* 2 (*Dig.* 48.2.12.4) and Macer. *De publ. iud.* 1 (*Dig.* 48.1.1). More details are reported in Marc. *Inst. lib.* 14 (*Dig.* 48.9.1), Paul. *Sent.* 5.24, *Inst.* 4.18.6, where the law is identified as *lex Pompeia de parricidiis*. After the promulgation of the lex the crime of *parricidium* was extended to the murders of relatives, be that in the direct or collateral line: Santalucia 1989, 61.

[25] For a *status quaestionis* of the debate on the issue, see Fanizza 1979, 265-289 and Thomas 1981, 643-715.

[26] Zanzucchi 1910, 296-297; Fanizza 1979, 272. For the arguments against this hypothesis, see Thomas 1981, 655 n.32.

[27] For these hypotheses, see Zanzucchi 1910, 296-297; Fanizza 1979, 272-273

[28] The woman who contracted the marriage *cum manu* left the paternal family and entered the spouse's family in a subordinate status. She found herself in *loco filiae*, concerning her husband, who acquired the *manus maritalis* over her, and *loco neptis*, involving her husband's father. On the *manus* see Cantarella 1962, 181-228; Marrone 2006, 254-256; Amunátegui Perelló 2007, 51-163. This kind of union was common in the monarchic and republican periods, falling later into disuse during the Principate. After the middle of the 1st century BC it is difficult to find attestations of the *conventio in manum* (Looper-Friedman 1987, 281-296).

[29] *Dig.* 48.8.1.5. *«Sed et in eum, qui uxorem deprehensum in adulterio occidit, divus Pius leviorem poenam irrogandam esse scripsit, et humiliore loco positum in exilium perpetuum dari iussit, in aliqua dignitate positum ad tempus relegari».*

[30] Zanzucchi 1910, 296-297; Fanizza 1979, 272.

[31] On the father's right to kill his children: montanini 2010, 1-26. One example of a father who killed their daughters is Pontius Aufidianus, a Roman knight, who killed his daughter because she had been deflowered by the pedagogue Fannius Saturninus: Val. Max. 6.1.3 (Linderski 1990, 86-93). Another example is *Publius Atilius Filiscus*, who killed his daughter because she had been deflowered by a rapist (Val. Max. 6.1.6).

[32] This means that, depending on the nature of the relationship with the victim, different laws governed the murder of a woman. It is probable, however, that the punishment imposed on the offender was the same for a time, with the *interdictio aqua et igni* also being provided for the parricide. At least until Augustus regulated patricide by re-establishing *the pœna cullei* for those guilty of the murder of their parents (Del Giudice, Beltrani 1995, 138-139); distinguishing in this sense, the *manifestum* (offender caught in the act or confessed) from the rest of the case, probably punished with relegation, arson or *damnatio ad bestias* (Landucci 1898, 328-329).

The *dominus* who takes his servant's life is exercising his right[33], whereas someone who kills another's slave is punished according to the *lex Aquilia de damno* issued between the second half of the 3rd and the first half of the 2nd century BC. This law regulated the case in which an individual unjustly kills the slave or the quadruped of a third party, condemning him to pay compensation for the maximum value of the servant or animal according to the quotations of the year preceding the offense[34]. Malice or guilt was required for liability: the *dominus* then had the option of accusing the murderer with an *actio pœnalis* or claiming compensation for the damage suffered by filing a civil lawsuit[35]. Lastly, one should note that under certain circumstances it was possible to kill free women with impunity. Indeed, during the monarchic and republican ages, if a wife committed adultery or drank wine[36], it was the husband's right to exercise the *ius occidendi*[37].

The *lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis* (18-16 BC) regulated the rampant corruption of customs that, according to Augustus, was affecting Roman society. This law banned the right to remove the adulterous woman from her husband's family, entrusting the administration of justice to a public court[38]. The law, therefore, did not entirely abolish the possibility of resorting to the *ius occidendi* : the second chapter[39] explicitly grants the father the right to kill his daughter and her accomplice flagrantly caught while committing adultery in the occurrence of a series of circumstances. In particular, the father must have the daughter in his power, he must have caught the culprits in his own house or the house of his son-in-law, and he must kill both *in continenti* as an immediate reaction to the discovery[40].

The perpetrator of uxoricide could also hope for a mitigation of the sentence or even its annulment if justified by adultery. During the principate of Antoninus Pius, the possibility of a reduced sentence is contemplated for the murderer who claims to have killed his wife caught in the act of adultery[41]. In this case, the *humilior* is sentenced to hard labor (*opus perpetuum*) and not

[33] Slaves were among the *alieni iuris* because enslaved people were subject to the *dominica potestas.* The master exercised absolute power over them, as over all property, including the right of life and death (*ius vitae ac necis*). On the legal status of slaves: MARRONE 2006, 195-206. On the limitations of violence on slaves since Hadrian's principate: PAVÓN TORREJÓN 2010, 134-146.

[34] On *lex Aquilia:* SCHIPANI 1992, 129-187 and SCHIPANI 1996.

[35] Furthermore, according to Gai. *ad ed. prov.* 7 (*Dig.* 9, 2.), the law was only applicable in the case of *corpore corpora* damage (DEL GIUDICE, BELTRANI 1995, 27).

[36] For women and wine, see above n. 6.

[37] Dion. Hal. 2.25.6 attributes this rule to Romulus. See GUARINO 1992, 319-322 on royal legislation. In the exercise of the *ius vitae ac necis*, the husband was subject to the opinion of the domestic court made up of *cognati* (in the Latin meaning of 'relatives'). On the subject, RUGGIERO 1984, 1593-1600. The *pater familias* was dispensed from this bond if he caught his wife in flagrant adultery; according to Gell. 10.23.5, in this case he had the right to kill the woman and her lover also if the marriage was *sine manu*. Specifically, see FAYER 2005, 197-200. Although sources do not say it explicitly, jurists agree that the right was also extended to the father and, in this case, considered the exercise of *patria potestas* (FAYER 2005, 211).

[38] On *lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis* see DAUBE 1972, 373-380; FAYER 2005, 195-373.

[39] *Coll.* 4.2.3.

[40] *Dig.* 48.5.22.2-4. If the holder of the right had only killed the lover, he would not have exercised *ius occidendi* but would have committed murder, thus becoming subject to criminal law (LAMBERTINI 1992, 8). On the father's right to kill his adulterous daughter, see CANTARELLA 1972, 243-274; LORENZI 1991, 158-180.

[41] Pap. *Cuaest. lib.* 36 (*Dig.* 48.5.38.8): «*Imperator Marcus Antoninus et Commodus filius rescripserunt: "Si maritus uxorem in adulterio deprehensam impetu tractus doloris interfecerit, non utique legis Corneliae de sicariis poenam excipiet". Nam et Divus Pius in haec verba rescripsit Apollonio: "Ei, qui uxorem suam in adulterio deprehensam occidisse se non negat, ultimum supplicium remitti potest, quum sit difficillimum, iustum dolorem temperare; et magis quia plus fecerit, quam quia vindicare se non debuerit, puniendus sit; sufficiet igitur, si humilis loci sit, in opus perpetuum eum tradi, si qui honestior, in insulam relegari*».

to *damnatio ad bestias*. In contrast, the *honestior* is sentenced to *relegatio in insulam*[42], a milder punishment than *deportatio in insulam*[43].

Even more lenient than Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius and Commodus decreed that – if a husband had killed his spouse caught in the act of adultery – he should not be punished according to the *lex Cornelia*. It seems, consequently, that female infidelity was perceived as a mitigating factor for uxoricide in this period[44]. The events involving members of the *Domus Augusta* in the mid-first century AD already suggest this circumstance.

The *Domus Augusta* Murders: Octavia, Antonia and Poppea's Cases

When Nero became emperor in 54 AD, he was forced to marry Claudia Octavia, daughter of the previous emperor and Messalina. Despite her nobility and virtue, Octavia enjoyed neither the *Princeps*' sympathy nor love [45]. Nero dared not divorcing his wife, for the populace and his mother Agrippina felt sympathy for her despite the unhappy marriage and the lack of offspring[46]. What persuaded Nero to divorce her in 62 AD was his desire to marry Poppaea Sabina, his mistress. Octavia was thus accused of adultery, but there was no proof of it. So, the emperor was forced to dissolve the marriage, citing the woman's sterility as an excuse[47].

The demonstrations of affection that the Roman people had for Octavia after the divorce were fatal to her[48]. Worried by the situation, Nero decided to start a new trial against her, accusing her once more of adultery[49]. Having been exiled to Pandataria, Octavia suffered an atrocious death: first her limbs were tied down and then her veins slit. Since the blood was not flowing out due to fear, the killers had recourse to the steam of a boiling hot cauldron[50].

In view of this, it could be the case that Nero's accusation of adultery was not accidental, but shrewdly chosen in the belief that it would undermine the woman's reputation and consequently justify her brutal murder in the eyes of the people.

[42] The *relegatio in insulam*, temporary or perpetual, consisted of a forced stay in an isolated location. This punishment, however, did not entail the confiscation of property or the loss of the *status civitatis*, distinguished, in this sense, from *deportatio in insulam*. See Del Giudice, Beltrani 1995, 454.

[43] *Paul. Sent*. 5.17.2.

[44] Pavón Torrejón 2010, 260 rightly notes that these rescripts demonstrate a departure from the *lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis*, making it clear that, during the Augustan period, the blind rage of a betrayed husband was not seen as a mitigating factor in the accusation of murder.

[45] Tac. *Ann*. 13.12.

[46] Tac. *Ann*. 14.59.

[47] Tac. *Ann.* 14.60-64 narrates the succession of events that led to Octavia's death. Shortly after Nero's death, a tragedy entitled Octavia and wrongly attributed to Seneca was composed about her troubled life. On the subject, Manuwald 2010 and Maruzzino 2013. For a biography of Octavia, see Madeo 2006.

[48] On this point in particular, Murgatroyd 2008, 268.

[49] In Tac. *Ann.* 14. 62 it is written that, after the first accusations were dropped, Nero ensured that they could not be brought forward again; he persuaded Anicetus, already his accomplice in the murder of his mother Agrippina, to confess to having committed adultery with Octavia, guaranteeing him, in return, exile in a comfortable location.

[50] Tac. *Ann.* 16.64: «*Restringitur vinclis venaeque eius per omnes artus exsolvuntur; et quia pressus pavore sanguis tardius labebatur, praefervidi balnei vapore enecatur. Additurque atrocior saevitia, quod caput amputatum latumque in urbem Poppaea vidit*». According to Murgatroyd 2008, 264-273, Tacitus, while not expressing an opinion, presents the facts in a raw and emotional way, employing a wide range of techniques to emphasize the atrocity of the crime.

Claudia Antonia – daughter of Claudius and half-sister of Octavia – guilty of refusing marriage to Nero – was also executed by the emperor on the suspicious charge of *res novae*[51].

According to Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dione, the fate of Poppaea Sabina, Nero's second wife, was no better: while pregnant the emperor kicked her in the womb in a fit of rage. Poppea furiously reproached the emperor because he had returned late from a chariot race, thus triggering his fierce anger[52].

The three cases provide significant insights for assessing the applicability of the definition of femicide in Imperial Rome. On the one hand, they reveal elements tied to gender dynamics, such as the recurring use of adultery accusations to undermine the credibility and honor of elite Roman women. This mechanism, employed by Nero against Octavia, fits into patterns of controlling female sexuality and gender-based discrimination. Moreover, the brutality of Octavia's execution suggests an intent of both symbolic and physical annihilation, characteristic of violence that transcends political motivations to target the female body. However, Octavia's case also highlights political implications that are difficult to disentangle, as her elimination served Nero's desire to legitimize his relationship with Poppaea by removing an obstacle that was both personal and political. A similar complexity emerges in Antonia's case, where her refusal to marry Nero represented both a personal defiance and a political challenge. Finally, the death of Poppaea Sabina, although tied to an episode of uncontrolled rage, stands out for its lack of evident political motivations, appearing as an act of brutality aimed at reaffirming male control. However, the way the sources narrate the episode leaves open the possibility that the murder resulted from a momentary outburst of anger. Without further details, it is challenging to determine whether sufficient elements exist to categorize it as femicide.

The case of Apronia

Another case of uxoricide is that of Apronia[53], wife of the praetor Marcus Plautius Silvanus[54], who in 24 AD was found dead below a window of the marital domus. The victim's father, senator Lucius Apronius[55], suspected his son-in-law of committing a murder and appealed to Emperor Tiberius for justice. Silvanus gave confused answers about what had happened, declaring himself innocent and

[51] Suet. *Nero* 35.4: «*Antoniam Claudi filiam, recusantem post Poppaeam mortem nuptias suas quasi molitricem novarum rerum interemit*». The accusation of *res novae* was similar to that of Cicero against Catiline: Cic. *Cat.* 1.1.3; Sall. *Con. Cat.* 28.4.

[52] Tac. *Ann.* 16. 6, Suet. *Nero.* 35.3 and Dio. 62.27.4 narrated the murder in a concordant manner. This fact has led to the assumption that the three historiographers drew on the same primary source (Mayer 1982, 248-249). Tacitus makes an interesting specification: some historians said that Nero poisoned Poppaea, although he does not believe this hypothesis. For this reason, according to Mayer 1982, 249, it should be considered that Poppaea could have died in childbirth without Nero's "help." Thus, her death would have been reported in this way by historiography to attribute further tyrannic connotations to Nero's rule. In any case, Tacitus does not believe the poisoning hypothesis to be viable because of the emperor's love for his wife. In this sense, it is possible to see how the historiographer has no difficulty reconciling the kick delivered to the woman's womb with the love the Princeps felt for her. See Clark 1999, 120.

[53] Apronia (*PIR*^{2} I n.975) is known only from *CIL* VI 9849 and Tac. *Ann.* 4.22.1-5 was the daughter of Lucius Apronius.

[54] M. Plautius Silvanus (*PIR*^{2} VI n.479), son of the Augustan consul of the same name (*PIR*^{2} VI n.478), was related to the Julio-Claudian dynasty, as the brother of Plautia Urgulanilla (*PIR*^{2} VI n.488), first wife of Emperor Claudius.

[55] Lucius Apronius (*PIR*^{2} I n.971), Roman senator and military man, *consul suffectus* in AD 8; was politically very active during the reign of Tiberius.

saying that, when his wife died, he was in a state of deep sleep. He consequently claimed that his wife had committed suicide[56].

This explanation did not persuade Tiberius. After inspecting the bedroom and finding signs of a struggle[57], he realized that the murder accusation was justified and sent a report to the senate, which appointed judges to try this case (*refert ad senatum, datisque iudicibus*)[58].

As far as we can tell from Tacitus's account, what happens next was influenced by the friendship between Urgulania, Silvanus' grandmother, and Livia Drusilla, Tiberius' mother and Augustus' widow. Urgulania must have been informed by Livia of the likely outcome of the trial. To avoid an imperishable mark of infamy on her nephew, Urgulania arranged for a dagger to be delivered to Silvanus, thus inviting him to take his own life[59]. After unsuccessfully trying to kill himself with this weapon, Silvanus had his veins slit by a third person, possibly a slave or a doctor[60].

Tacitus ends his account by reporting that, not long after Silvanus' suicide, the case was reopened. This time, the defendant was Fabia Numantina[61], the praetor's first wife. The accusation against the woman was that she upset her ex-husband's mind by using magic spells and potions[62], which allegedly drove the man to kill his new wife. This would have also explained the apparent state of confusion in which Silvanus found himself during the interrogation[63]. Numantina was, however, acquitted for lack of evidence. Although Tacitus reports this story, it seems clear that he does not believe it. Indeed, from the beginning of the narrative, he leaves no doubt as to the identity of the perpetrator: «*Plautius Silvanus* [...] *Aproniam coniugem in praeceps iecit*».

Although the circumstances of the discovery of Apronia's corpse and the timing of the event are not disclosed, Silvanus' guilt shines through the narration of the facts [64]. No signs of forced entry

[56] Tac. *Ann.* 4. 22, 1*:* «*Per idem tempus Plautius Silvanus praetor incertis causis Aproniam coniugem in praeceps iecit, tractusque ad Caesarem ab L. Apronio socero*». The affair proves what is written in Plut. *Quaest. rom*. 108, according to which women needed to have the protection of their family within marriage. Women were to be treated with consideration to not sour relations between families within the already complex dynamics of the Roman *nobilitas.*

[57] Tac. *Ann.* 4. 22. 2.

[58] Because of the way Tacitus is narrated, the course of the trial of Silvanus has long been a source of confusion in understanding Roman legal procedure; cf. HICKS 2013, 55; MAGGIULLI 1978, 73-78. The latter argues that Saevius Plautus, who was tried on the charge of having sexually assaulted his son in AD 24 (Hier. *Chron.* 254F), is identifiable with M. Plautius Silvanus. Tacitus would have withheld the information out of sympathy for the senatorial class. According to HICKS 2013, 62-63, if this hypothesis were correct, the course of the trial narrated by Tacitus would agree with what is known about the senatorial procedure and criminal jurisprudence under Tiberius.

[59] Tac. *Ann.* 4. 22. 4.; LEVICK 2021, 91-93 suggests that Urgulania (*PIR*^{2} VI, 684) may have been so severe because her nephew would have shattered the family edifice she had helped to build over the previous two decades, linking her own family of Plautis to that of the Caesars.

[60] Tac. *Ann.* 4. 22. 5.

[61] *Fabia Numantina* (*PIR*^{2} III n.78), mentioned in *CIL* XI 1362, was a member of the patrician *gens* Fabia, although it is not clear how she intersected with it; she married twice: the first time to a certain Sextus Appuleius, great-grandson of Augustus, by whom she had a son, bearing the same name as his father. After the death of her husband and son, she contracted a second marriage with Plautius Silvanus, divorcing him before he was appointed praetor in AD 24, the same year of the death of Apronia, his second wife.

[62] Tac. *Ann.* 4. 22. 6.

[63] Enchantment – already regulated in the Laws of the XII Tables: «*Qui malum carmen incantassit* [...] » (*Tab.,* VIII, 1) – was a common accusation against women. Poison is, in fact, considered a typically female weapon, as it does not require physical strength but cunning and shrewdness. In this specific case, – as CARUCCI 2018, 71 suggests based on Quint. *Inst. Or.* 7.8.2. –, it is possible that, in the wake of the accusation of vengeance leveled at Numantina, the intention was to suggest, in an allusive way, that Silvanus was a violent husband.

[64] Tacitus' account of the murder was probably taken, like much of Book IV, directly or indirectly from the *Acta Senatus* (LEVICK 2021, 82).

were found, so the only people suspected were those in the house: that is the family and the slaves. These last ones were probably not considered because of a lack of motive[65].

In addition, it is important to bear in mind that signs of a struggle were found in the bedroom. Combining this circumstance with the detail reported by Tacitus on Silvanus' state of sleep, it is reasonable to think that husband and wife were in the same room at the time of the murder, making it unlikely that a third person could have attacked the woman unnoticed. For these reasons, there was probably a general agreement that Silvanus was guilty.

However, the motive of the murder is unclear; it could have been personal or political [66]. Due to the murder, the offender's sister, Plautia Urgulanilla, was removed from her position as wife of Claudius as she was suspected of being an accomplice[67]. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the crime should be considered not in isolation but in its political context.

In other words, the murder of Apronia, like those connected to the *domus Augusta*, occupies a gray area and cannot be definitively classified as femicide. The absence of a clear motive explicitly tied to sexist attitudes or gender-based discriminatory behavior complicates its attribution to the category of femicide. However, the signs of struggle in the bedroom and Tacitus' account suggest a private dynamic of violence, which could align with broader forms of gender-based discrimination.

The case of Pontia Postumina

In 58 AD the plebeian tribune Octavius Sagitta[68] fell madly in love with a married woman, Pontia Postumina[69], and tried to seduce her with generous gifts. Attracted by the money, Postumina was persuaded to commit adultery. Then Octavius, moved by his love for her and desire to have her all for his own, persuaded Postumina to dissolve her current marriage and commit to a new union with him. After divorcing, Postumina quickly forswore what she had promised, adducing as an excuse her father's hostility to the marriage.

Octavius did not accept this betrayal and tried to change Postumina's mind through pleas and threats. He even went as far as to threaten to kill himself after appealing in vain to the woman's conscience and her compromised reputation[70]. However, since neither flattery nor threats seemed to have any effect, Octavius asked Postumina for one last meeting to appease his torments and control himself in the future. Postumina consented to the meeting and entrusted a loyal servant to guard the room where they were going to see each other. Octavius instead showed up accompanied by one of his freedmen. Tacitus masterfully recounts this encounter in which - as is often the case in matters of love and anger - quarrels, pleas, accusations, and excuses occur, followed by a moment of heated erotic passion. At the end of this episode, Octavius struck Postumina with a dagger that

[65] Levick 2021, 91-93.

[66] On this hypothesis, Levick 2021, 91-93.

[67] This can be guessed from Suet. *Claud.* 26, 2.

[68] Octavius Sagitta (*PIR*^{2} V n.57), tribune of the plebs in 58 AD, belongs to the distinguished gens Octavia. He was a Roman senator, probably the nephew of a well-known knight of the same name (*PIR*^{2} V n. 58). He became a well-known individual after holding important positions in the administration of provinces in the early years of the principate.

[69] No information is known about the origins of Pontia Postumina (*PIR*^{2} V 853).

[70] Tac. *Ann.* 13.44.1-2.

he had kept hidden under his clothes. Before fleeing the house, Octavius also struck the Postumina's slave, who had rushed to the aid of her mistress[71].

The following day, suspicions immediately fell on Octavius, as there was evidence that the two had been staying together. The freedman of Octavius', however, claimed to have committed the murder, justifying it as a revenge for the offense caused to his patron. This gesture moved many in that it displayed the freedman's great devotion to his former master: «*commoveratque quosdam magnitudine exempli*». Despite this, the slave of Postumina, once awake, recounted what happened that night[72]. Her testimony nailed Octavius, who was then denounced by the father of the victim and punished by the Senate according to the *lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis*[73]. He reappears later in the *Historiae* when, after serving thirteen years of his sentence in 70 AD, was excluded from the revocation of the banishment granted to others[74].

Even if Octavius was condemned, the narrative unequivocally shows Tacitus' negative opinion of the victim. Postumina is a greedy woman who commits adultery lured by money and, for the same reason, betrays the pact made with Octavius. Even the expedient of the last encounter used by the man does not mitigate the historian's opinion of Postumina. It was not a raptus that triggered Octavius' murderous fury; the knife previously concealed in his clothes indicates premeditation.

Tacitus's narration indicates that, in his eyes, the blame for what had happened could not be entirely ascribed to Octavius. It is Postumina who pushed Octavius to kill her, as her impudence and greed led her to break her promise. In this sense, it is interesting how Tacitus emphasizes the moved reaction that the freedman's confession arouses in public opinion. Such a reaction to such a vile act could not be justified solely by the *exemplum* of the freedman's deep loyalty to the *patronus.* For this reason, one could read into the passage the desire to show how the Postumina's actions towards Octavius made his murder acceptable to a certain extent.

Quite eloquently, the following passage in the Annales opens with the phrase «*Non minus insignis eo anno impudicitia magnorum rei publicae malorum initium fecit*»[75]. In these terms, the sentence suggests that it was not the murder but the woman's impudence that made the episode of Pontia Postumina and Octavius scandalous. Furthermore, it should be noted that the story Tacitus narrates concerns Poppaea Sabina, who, as is well known, was cricitized for her alleged immoral conduct. Therefore, given the great emphasis on moralism that characterizes the *Annales*, it has been hypothesized that Tacitus reported the case of Poppaea because of the striking parallelism with the scandals involving the future wife of Nero. Both Postumina and Poppea are described as seductive, greedy, and morally deficient women who betray their husbands with men who are victims of passion, to whom they are then once more unfaithful because of their greed[76]. Although Tacitus likely makes use of the story of Pontia Postumina to anticipate the events surrounding Poppea, what emerges as essential despite the true historical motives, is Octavius' obsessive behavior and, to an even greater extent, the fact that jealousy and possessiveness are seen as

[71] Tac. *Ann.* 13.44. 3-7. For a commentary on the style of the *Annales* on the events surrounding Pontia Postumina HELLEGOUARC'H 1990, 33-34.

[72] Tac. *Ann.* 13.44. 8-9.

[73] Tac. *Ann.* 13.44. 10.

[74] According to Tac. *Hist.* 4.44 .2 Mucianus, consul in 70 AD, to avoid the impression of disregarding the opinion of the senate and guaranteeing Octavius impunity for all the nefarious deeds committed under Nero, sent him back into exile. On the specific political reasons that led to the confirmation of the murderer's sentence, ROGERS 1949, 347-350.

[75] Tac. *Ann.* 13.45. 1.

[76] SCHÖNBERGER 1963, 506-508.

motivations for murder. In light of these considerations, the case can be effectively categorized within the framework of femicide as defined in this study.

The Case of Appia Annia Regilla

Under Marcus Aurelius, another famous case of murder revolved around Appia Annia Regilla[77], wife of the eminent politician and rhetorician Claudius Atticus Herodes[78]. Philostratus narrates the circumstances of Regilla's death in the *Lives of the Sophists*[79]. In 160, Regilla died mysteriously while she was eight months pregnant. Appius Annius Atilius Bradua[80], Regilla's brother and consul, accuses Herod of having her brutally beaten by his freedman Alcimedon. By striking her womb, Alcimedon caused Regilla to miscarry and die[81]. Although Herod was notorious for his irascible character[82], he rejected the accusations in court[83], acknowledging that Regilla had been murdered but denying that the order had come from him[84]. Since Bradua's accusation was specific, we can assume that Herod was acquitted just because he was protected by his friend Marcus Aurelius[85]. The emperor exonerated Herod by placing Alcimedon as the only culprit, who suffered no punishment[86].

The death of Appia Annia Regilla contains several elements that align it with the phenomenon of femicide, particularly in terms of violence targeted at the female body and its symbolic implications. Furthermore, it serves as a significant example for examining not only femicide but also domestic violence, shedding light on its prevalence, consequences, and the justice system's response. The absence of punishment for the freedman Alcimedon, despite his evident

[77] Appia Annia Regilla (*PIR*^{2} I n.720) was related to Annia Galeria Faustina, wife of Antoninus Pius, and, thus, to Annia Faustina wife of Marcus Aurelius. Her father, Appius Annius Gallus (*PIR*^{2} I n.654), was a member of the venerable family of the *Annii Regilli* (Pomeroy 2007, 14).

[78] T. Claudius Atticus Herodes (*PIR*^{2} I n.802) was a sophist, philosopher, rhetorician, and tutor of the future emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. Member of an illustrious Athenian family, he is regarded as one of the most eminent personalities of the empire during the middle of the 2nd century AD. For a biography, see Graindor 1930.

[79] Philostr. *Vit. Soph*. 555-560.

[80] Appius Annius Atilius Bradua (*PIR*^{2} I n. 636) was a Roman senator. The sources no longer attest to him after his defeat in court and tenure as proconsul, which was probably the peak of his career.

[81] The brother-in-law was only able to sue Herodes because the beatings caused Regilla's death (Garibotti 2023, 147).

[82] It is more than plausible that Regilla had written letters to her brother complaining about Herod's violent temper (Pomeroy 2007, 121). Moreover, there is proof that he had already committed violent acts (Pomeroy 2007, 4-120-121). Also, there is evidence attesting to his misogynistic attitudes (Pomeroy 2007, 31 on Philostr. *Vit. Soph*. 561).

[83] Philostr. *Vit. Soph*. 555-560. Herod's grief, real or feigned, led him to dedicate an inscription (*CIL* VI 1342) to his deceased wife: Ἀννία Ῥηγίλλα, / Ἡρῴδου γυνή, τὸ φῶς / τῆς οἰκίας, τίνος ταῦ/τα τὰ χωρία γέγοναν. / *Annia Regilla / Hirodis (!) uxor,/ lumen domus,/ cuius haec / praedia / fuerunt.*

[84] Philostr. *Vit. Soph.* 556: The biographer argues unconvincingly for Herod's innocence, pointing to Alcimedon as the perpetrator, although he does not explicitly acquit Herod of the accusation of complicity (Pomeroy 2007, 122-123). Scholars are inclined to give credence to Bradua's accusation (e.g., Harris 2001, 228).

[85] The correspondence between Marcus Aurelius and Fronto provides abundant evidence of the affection that bound the emperor to his former guardian (Pomeroy 2007, 38-39). It is difficult to imagine that a freedman could have perpetrated such a crime against his former master's spouse, who was moreover related to the emperor's wife unless he had been asked to do so. On the relationship between freedman and *patronus*, Eck 1996, 165-174 and Wallace-Hadrill 1989, 63-87.

[86] Philostr. *Vit. Soph.* 560

involvement in the murder, highlights a systematic tolerance of domestic violence in Roman society[87].

The Cases from Epigraphic Sources: Iulia Maiana, Prima Florentia, Rubria Maiorica and Aia Turellia

In addition to literary sources, epigraphic documentation clearly attests to acts of deadly violence against women. One such case involves a *mulier* whose funerary monument was found in 1856 in *Lugdunum*, the capital of Lugdunense Gaul. It is currently on display in the *Musée gallo-romain de Lyon-Fourvière*[88]. The inscription – placed *sub ascia* and datable between the mid-2nd century AD and the first decades of the 3rd century AD[89] – does not present any decipherable problems, except for a rectangular hole located in the lower part of the stone that affects the last two lines[90]:

> *D(is) M(anibus) / et quieti aeternae / Iuliae Maianae femi/nae sanctissimae, manu / mariti crudelissim(i/e/a) inter/fect(ae), quae ante obi(i)t quam fatum / dedit; cum quo vix(it) ann(os) XXVIII, ex / quo liber(os) procreav(it) duos puerum / ann(orum) XVIIII, puellam annor(um) XVIII. / O fides o pietas! Iul(ius) Maior fra/ter sorori dulciss(imae) et [Ing]enuinius / Ianuarius fil(ius) eius p(onendum) [c(uraverunt) et su]b a(scia) d(edicaverunt)* [91].

The inscription, which opens with the usual *adprecatio* to the *Mani* gods, is dedicated to a woman named Iulia Maiana by her brother, Iulius the Elder, and her son, a certain Ingenuinius Ianuarius[92].

The deceased, *sanctissima* e *dulcissima,* as an *univira* mother of two children, devoted to her husband for twenty-eight years, takes on the typical connotations of the Roman matron within the inscription[93]. The text would, therefore, be analogous to many others if it did not make explicit the causes of the woman's death: *manu mariti crudelissim*(*i/e/a*) *inter/fect*(*ae*).

It is somehow surprising that the word CRVDELISSIM was left open to so many different interpretations, as its syntactic function is instrumental in correctly interpreting the text[94]. The

[87] On the topic of domestic violence against *uxores* and its regulation in Rome, see Clark 1999, 109-129; Parca 2002, 283-296; Witzke 2016, 248-274; Neri 2016, 51-78; Klaiber Hersch 2020, 68-93; Garibotti 2023, 143-156.

[88] The inscription is placed on a limestone *cippus*, in which an ornamental decoration is still visible at the top, where two square holes can be identified. At the base of the support, another square hole could suggest a later reuse (Pavón Torrejón 2011, 254).

[89] Scholars have suggested several datings regarding this inscription; see the discussion in Casella 2017, 281. In my opinion, the most convincing hypothesis is that of Pavón Torrejón 2011, 255 and González Herrero 2016, 272, according to whom the type of writing, the use of an unusual superlative *crudelissim*(*i/e/a*) and the dedication *Sub Ascia* allow us to date the monument between the mid 2nd century and the first decades of the 3rd century AD.

[90] The missing part of the inscription was thus supplemented: *p(onendum) [c(uraverunt) et s]ub ascia dedicaverunt*, a common formula in Gallo-Roman funerary inscriptions (Pavón Torrejón 2011, 255). The value of the axe in this context is still a matter of debate. However, the most accepted hypothesis is that it was as an element guaranteeing the security of the tomb. See Panciera 1960, 701-707 and Mayer 2013, 15-40.

[91] *CIL* XIII, 2182.

[92] Pavón Torrejón 2011, 254-255 notes how the exact name of Iulia's son appears in a votive inscription from Germania Inferior (*CIL* XIII, 8789). Although the hypotheses are not conclusive, the uncommon *nomen gentilicium* indicates that he could be the same person. As Casella 2017, 282 rightly points out, no information is given about the socio-legal status of the family, but the *nomen gentilicium* of Iulia's son suggests that they were freeborn people of indigenous origin.

[93] On the subject, see Cenerini 2008; Cenerini 2016. On the role of women in ancient Rome, see in general Cenerini 2002.

[94] The issue was raised by Pavón Torrejón 2011, 255-257.

lemma may be used as an adverb of manner, *crudelissim(e)*, suggesting that Iulia was killed ruthlessly by her husband. The term might otherwise be intended to emphasize her husband's brutal and despicable character; the adjective would thus pair with the noun *maritus*: *manu mariti crudelissim(i)*[95]. A third option would be to consider the term as an adjective in a superlative measure: the attribute *crudelissim(a)* would qualify the noun *manus*.

Regardless of the syntactic value of the term, since the word *manus* appears in the inscription in the ablative singular, it is assumed to refer to a single hand. It follows that the text refers to how the murder took place: the husband would have ended Iulia's life by using his hand. This reconstruction would then suggest that the victim was stabbed, thrown into the void, whipped, or beaten to death[96].

Epigraphic evidence of the uxoricide of Iulia Maiana has a precedent in an inscription, datable to the 2nd century AD, found in *Portus* in 1930 and currently kept in the Ostia Necropolis warehouse. Her parents dedicate the inscription to a young woman, Prima Florentia, who was murdered by her husband when she was only sixteen years old[97]:

> *Restutus Piscinesis/ et Prima Restuta Primae/ Florentiae filiae carissimae/ fecerunt, qui ab Orfeu maritu in/ Tiberi* (Scil. *vita) decepta est. December cocnatu/ posuit. Q(uae) vix(it) ann(is) XVI s(emis?)*[98].

The inscription, unlike the previous one, clearly specifies the name of the murderer, *Orfeu maritu*, and the manner of the murder: her life was taken in the Tiber (*in Tiberi decepta est*).

The circumstances of Prima's death may have been made even more tragic for the family[99] as, due to her very young age, she may have died without having procreated. Moreover, given the manner of the murder, she may have been left unburied[100].

In another inscription found in *Diana Veteranorum* (Aïn Zana), in Numidia, the word *decepta* appears with a sense that could be similar:

> *D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum)/ Rubria Ma/iorica vixit / annis LX, de/cepta a Clodio Pa/[st]ore marito suo. / Fil(ii) matri caris/[si]mae fecerunt*[101].

The formulas used in this inscription, such as the *adprecatio* to the *Manes*, suggest a dating to the 2nd century AD. It is a dedication to a mother by her children, whose gender or age is not specified. Although the way she died is not mentioned, the text says that Rubria Maiorica was killed by her husband, Clodius Pastor[102]. Maiorica must have lived for many years with her husband, as she was in her sixties at the time of her death.

The three inscriptions present a very similar structure. In fact, in the text of Iulia Maiana, one can note a kind of antithesis that contrasts the profound respect for the marriage of the

[95] A hypothesis shared by Casella 2017, 281 and González Herrero 2016, 272.

[96] This hypothesis was put forward by Pavón Torrejón 2011, 261 and shared by Casella 2017, 281. It is not the only reference to a murderous hand within epigraphic texts: see *CIL* IV, 38425; 7419; *CIL* VI, 19747. On the public and private execution of women, see Cantarella 1991, 129-140 and Pavón Torrejón 2006, 287-300.

[97] This is an epitaph with roughly engraved letters on a white marble slab placed in the wall of a tomb, which can be dated to the 2nd century AD according to the archaeological context (Helttula 2007, 325-326 nr. 321).

[98] *AE* 1987, 77.

[99] As in the case of Iulia Maiana, it is difficult to speculate on the socio-legal status of the family. However, the Greek origin of the name of the uxoricide indicates a relatively humble origin (Casella 2017, 280). On the uncommon onomastics of the victim's family, see Solin 1987, 121-124.

[100] On these hypotheses, Casella 2017, 280-281.

[101] *CIL* VIII, 04621.

[102] Ehmig 2013, 141.

woman, *sanctissima*, with the cruelty of her husband, who killed her. Similarly, in the epigraphs of Prima, called *filia carissima*, and Rubria, called *mater carissima*, the moving expressions used suggest their innocence.

One could reasonably argue that if the women had been found guilty of some misdeed such as overt adultery, their families would not have used this language. For this reason, these epitaphs are both an instrument of denunciation and a paradigm of family *pietas*[103]. Unfortunately, the motives for the murders are never stated, nor whether the uxoricides were punished for their crime[104]. Still, the attempt at denunciation is evident in the fact that the names of the murderers are always disclosed, even when not made explicit. In this regard, it should not be underestimated that although the husband's name is not spelled out in Iulia's epitaph, it is nevertheless easily intelligible due to the onomastics of the son who dedicated the inscription[105].

To conclude the examination of the epigraphic sources, there is another inscription that could potentially testify to a case of "femicide". It is carved on a white limestone stele in two fragments in Huerta de Rey, in Hispania Tarraconensis[106]:

> *Aiiae Turel/liae C(aii) Turel/li f(iliae) an(norum) XXVI[II?] / occis{s}a a s[er]/vo C(aius) Turel[li]/us et Vale/ri[a] / ------*[107].

The parents placed the inscription for their daughter killed by a slave[108]. Although the text does not make explicit the manner of the murder, it is possible to deduce it, due to the use of the term *occisa*[109], which is more specific than *interfecta*[110]. *Occidere* generally indicates a violent death using a sharp object or weapon[111]. Thus, although the motive for the murder is omitted, the use of this specific word – together with the servile condition of the offender, reasonably aware of the

[103] A hypothesis already considered by Pavón Torrejón 2011, 262, for *CIL* XIII, 2182 and *AE* 1987, 77.

[104] To see what their punishment might have been, see above.

[105] With regard to *CIL* XIII, 2182 and *AE* 1987, 77, Casella 2017, 283 considers whether the name of the uxoricide is to be attributed to a different sensibility of the dedicators or whether the reason is to be found in the successful legal pursuit of the murderer. In my opinion, it is more likely that in the case of Iulia, making the name of the uxoricide explicit was superfluous due to the presence of her son's name.

[106] The epigraph, datable to the 1st century AD, is re-inscribed about two meters high on the façade of Villa Arturo, 34 Palacios Street in Huerta de Rey. A renovation of the façade in 2010 covered the entire wall, leaving the pieces somewhat hidden. The lower part has been lost, affecting at least one line of text (Del Hoyo, Rodríguez Ceballos 2017, 174-176). The upper part features a bust of a woman with an iconography of great stylistic value and a garland. On the latter subject, Abásolo 1985, 285-392 and Abásolo 1992, 213-232.

[107] *HEp* 1990, 107.

[108] For examples of slaves killing their masters: Tac. *Ann.* 14. 40 on the murder of Lucius Pedanius Secundus, and Plin. *Ep.* 8.14 on the murder of Gnaeus Afranius Dexter.

[109] Another inscription that attests to the use of the verb comes from Aquileia (*CIL* V 890): *M(arcus) Aufustius/M(arci) f(ilio) Rom(ilia)/Actiacus, /Valeriae C(ai) lib(ertae)/ Charidi coniugi,/ Chrysidi f(iliae) ann(orum) XX occisae,/ L(ucio) Albio L(uci) l(iberto) Sabino/ contubernali*. This inscription was placed on a monument that a certain Marcus Aufustius erected for his wife Valeria Charis, a freedwoman, for his daughter Chrysis, who was killed, for his *contubernalis* Lucius Albius Sabinus and, probably, for himself (Boscolo 2016, 187). No information is provided about the identity or motive of the murderer.

[110] Del Hoyo, Rodríguez Ceballos 2017, 178.

[111] On this topic, see the study by Sánchez Manzano 1991, 85-87. In Latin inscriptions, one encounters the verb *interficere* more often than *occidere* (Del Hoyo, Rodríguez Ceballos 2017, 179). At least six inscriptions in Hispania and twenty-four outside, make use of the form *occisus / occisa* to refer to violent deaths in the public or private sphere (Abascal 2023, 9).

consequences of such an act – leads one to consider a passionate motive even though the hypothesis is indemonstrable[112].

In summary, because epigraphic sources evidence remains ambiguous about the motives, do not allow us to provide definitive conclusions regarding the possibility of classifying these episodes as femicide, though they remain valuable for investigating instances of domestic violence.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study's review of sources has been to analyze cases of documented murders of women in Imperial Rome to assess whether the modern definition of femicide can be applied to these episodes. The goal is not to provide a general or definitive classification of the motivations behind such murders in antiquity but rather to explore how the available sources can offer insights into dynamics related to gender-based violence and, specifically, what is now referred to as femicide.

The analysis of these sources reveals that a quantitative assessment of the phenomenon is impossible. This limitation stems primarily from the scarcity and bias of ancient literary sources. Ancient historians recorded only a limited number of cases, often chosen for their emotional or historical impact rather than with the aim of raising awareness or condemnation. These episodes typically serve the main narrative and fail to provide comprehensive or reliable details about the personal dynamics that led to the crimes. This selectivity reflects a cultural sensitivity very different from todays, as violence against women was not considered a subject worthy of specific attention.

Nevertheless, it is possible to draw some qualitative insights based on the analysis of these sources.

The case of Pontia Postumina aligns closely with the modern definition of femicide. Jealousy, possessiveness, and control clearly emerge as the motives behind her murder. Similarly, the violence that led to the death of Annia Regilla, apparently exacerbated by trivial reasons and though not directly carried out by her husband, reveals dynamics of oppression, inequality, and abuse that can be linked to gender-based violence. The nature of Apronia's murder is more ambiguous. While some details in the narrative suggest a motive tied to gender, the lack of clear evidence regarding the reasons behind the crime makes it difficult to classify it definitively as femicide. The case of Poppea Sabina is even more controversial. The available sources not only express skepticism about the events but also leave open the possibility that her murder resulted from a sudden outburst of anger. Without further details, it is challenging to determine whether sufficient elements exist to categorize this as femicide. The cases of Claudia Octavia and Claudia Antonia represent a complex intersection of personal, political, and gender-related motivations. While the power dynamics and the elite's instrumentalization of gender complicate their classification as femicide, the use of gendered rhetoric to justify or facilitate their elimination underscores the need for critical analysis of the sources and careful consideration of gender implications in these episodes.Finally, the precise motives behind the murders documented in epigraphic sources remain unknown. However, the language and details in these texts make it

[112] A similar hypothesis could be made for an inscription discovered in recent times in Baetica, where a similar use of the verb is documented: *Vi(c)toria/ Octavi/ l(iberta) occisa / est a(nnorum) LX./ H(ic) s(ita) e(st) s(it) t(erra) l(evis)* (Abascal 2023, 7-14). However, in this case, the hypothesis is even weaker because it lacks any indication as to the identity of the murderer.

plausible to hypothesize a gender-based motive akin to femicide, even though such an attribution cannot be confirmed with certainty.

As seen, the legal implications of a woman's murder in Imperial Rome are highly complex to analyze, owing to both the contentious nature of legal sources and the stratified social structure of Roman society. However, it is clear that the murder of a free woman could entail legal consequences under Roman law.

Historiographical sources, which by their nature provide a more concrete perspective than jurisprudence alone, confirm that in the cases examined – excluding, of course, Nero – those responsible for the murder of free women were subjected to criminal trials. This demonstrates a certain legal recognition of the gravity of such crimes and the necessity of prosecuting them. However, as seen in the case of Annia Regilla, the administration of justice was often influenced by power dynamics and social hierarchies.

The difficulty in distinguishing between personal, political, and gender-based motivations in the documented cases highlights the complexity of a system that, while formally recognizing violence as a crime, did not address it as a structural or systemic issue. This underscores the limitations of the Roman legal framework in confronting gender-based violence as an inherent social problem.

Another significant aspect is the inherent contradiction in Roman society regarding the protection of free women. While these women were formally granted legal protection, such protection was often contingent upon their moral behavior. The case of Pontia Postumina illustrates this dynamic clearly. Tacitus portrays Postumina as a morally ambiguous figure, emphasizing her greed and sexual conduct, and shifting part of the responsibility for the violence she suffered onto the victim herself. This moral judgment diverts attention from the perpetrator to the victim, normalizing the notion that male jealousy and possessiveness could be justified by perceived immoral behavior on the part of women.

This perspective not only reinforces gender stereotypes but also diverges sharply from contemporary values regarding violence against women. Such attitudes are also reflected in Roman legislation, where behavior deemed morally questionable by a woman, such as adultery, could serve as a mitigating factor for the perpetrator of her murder – or, in some cases, even lead to his acquittal.

As a result, it becomes evident that the law and moral standards of the time often provided justification, or even protection, for men who committed murders with motives that align with modern definitions of femicide. For instance, while a man who killed a woman for non-personal reasons, such as theft, would face both moral and legal condemnation, the same man, if he killed an adulterous wife to reclaim possession or avenge a "moral injury," could not only find moral validation within the social framework but also evade legal punishment.

Regarding these considerations, a final suggestion concerns the potential prevalence of the phenomenon, though it remains unverifiable with certainty. Susan Treggiari and Serena Witzke[113] suggest that during the Principate, the availability of divorce made it a more convenient option than uxoricide, implying that the murder of wives was not as common in the imperial period. However, it is crucial to note that while uxoricide does not necessarily coincide with femicide and vice versa, when the two align – such as in cases of obsessive passion – divorce is not a feasible solution. In such instances, violence arises not merely from marital conflict but from a desire to assert absolute control, a dynamic that inherently excludes separation as an acceptable outcome.

[113] TREGGIARI 1991, 275; WITZKE 2016, 257.

While it is true that ancient sources report fewer cases of women's murders compared to the Republican period, this scarcity likely reflects not a genuine decline in such incidents but rather their invisibility in historical narratives. The context of Imperial Rome, characterized by the subordination of women through moral, social, and cultural precepts reinforcing gender inequality, contributed to legitimizing violent behavior by men, particularly when they felt they were losing control over women. This system of values not only normalized violence against women but embedded it within a patriarchal social structure. Such a framework inherently included the structural gender violence that defines femicide, making femicide a potentially widespread phenomenon, albeit one that remains underrepresented in the surviving sources.

MARTINA GARIBOTTI

UNIVERSITY OF VERONA

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABASCAL 2023 = J. M. ABASCAL PALAZÓN, "Vi(c)toria Octavi L(iberta) Occisa Est. *Un nuevo epígrafe romano de Chillón (Ciudad Real.* Conventus Cordubensis, Baetica), in *BAE*, X, 7-14.

ABÁSOLO 1985 = J. A. ABÁSOLO, *Época romana,* in *Historia de Burgos I,* A. MONTENEGRO DUQUE, J. M. PALOMARES IBÁÑEZ (Eds.), Burgos, pp. 285-392

ABÁSOLO 1992 = J. A ABÁSOLO*, Dos estelas procedentes de* Clunia *con forma de 'medallón'*, in *BSAA*, LVIII, pp. 213-232.

AMUNÁTEGUI PERELLÓ 2007 = C. F. AMUNÁTEGUI PERELLÓ, *L'origine dei poteri del paterfamilias, II: il paterfamilias e la manus*, in *REHJ*, XXIX, pp. 51-163

BOSCOLO 2016 = F. BOSCOLO, *Atestini in Italia, a Roma e nelle provincie*, in *Erga-Logoi*, IV, pp. 183-238.

CALABRESE 2018 = E. CALABRESE*, Vergini "fuori luogo": Tarpea e Orazia in Livio*, in *Vichiana,* LV, pp. 69-83.

CANTARELLA 1962 = E. CANTARELLA, *Sui rapporti fra matrimonio e* conventio in manum, in *RISG*, XCIII, pp. 181-228

CANTARELLA 1972 = E. CANTARELLA, *Adulterio, omicidio legittimo e causa d'onore in diritto roman*o, in *Studi in onore di G. Scherillo*, I, pp. 243-274.

CANTARELLA 1991 = E. CANTARELLA. *I supplizi capitali in Grecia e a Roma*, Milan.

CANTARELLA 2003 = E. CANTARELLA, *Passato prossimo. Donne romane da Tacita a Sulpicia*, Milan.

CARUCCI 2018 = M. CARUCCI, *Domestic Violence in Roman Imperial Society: Giving Abused Women a Voice*, in *Violence in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, M.C. PIMENTEL, N. S RODRIGUES (Eds.), Leuven - Paris, pp. 57-73.

CASELLA 2017 = V. CASELLA, *I kissed you before I killed you. Alcuni casi di uxoricidio nella Roma antica*, in *Epigraphica*, LXXIX, pp. 275-291.

CENERINI 2002 = F. CENERINI, *La donna romana: modelli e realtà*, Bologna.

CENERINI 2008 = F. CENERINI, *Elogio di Claudia*, in *Il Calzerotto Marrone*, VI, pp. 1-3.

CENERINI 2009 = F. CENERINI, *Dive e donne. Mogli, madri, figlie e sorelle degli imperatori romani da Augusto a Commodo,* Imola (Bologna).

CENERINI 2016 = F. CENERINI, *L'indagine sulla donna romana: fra modelli e stereotipi*, in *Donne, istituzioni e società fra tardo antico e alto medioevo*, F. CENERINI, I.G. MASTROROSA (Eds.), Lecce, pp. 7-12.

CENERINI 2024 = F. CENERINI, *Messalina. Leggenda e storia di una donna pericolosa,* Bari.

CERVELLI 1971 = A. CERVELLI, *Commento al carme epigrafico 1037 Buecheler*, in *AnnNap*, II, pp. 43-47.

CLARK 1999 = P. CLARK, *Women, slaves and the hierarchies of domestic violence: The family of St. Augustine*, in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, S. R. JOSHEL, S. MURNAGHAN (Eds.), New York, pp. 109-129.

CUGUSI 2007 = P. CUGUSI, *Per un nuovo corpus dei Carmina Latina Epigraphica. Materiali e discussioni*, in *MemAccLinc*, XXII, pp. 117-169.

DAUBE 1972 = D. DAUBE, *The Lex Julia Concerning Adultery*, in *IJ,* VII, pp. 373-380.

DEL GIUDICE, BELTRANI 1995 = F. DEL GIUDICE, S. BELTRANI, *Nuovo dizionario giuridico romano*, Napoli.

DEL HOYO, RODRÍGUEZ CEBALLOS 2017 = J. DEL HOYO, M. RODRÍGUEZ CEBALLOS, *Occis{s}a a servo. Murder in the Center of Clunia. Latin Inscriptions in Huerta de Rey (Burgos)*, in *ETF*, XXX, pp. 173-182.

DURRY 1955 = M. DURRY, *Les femmes et le vin*, in *REL*, XXXIII, pp. 108-113.

ECK 1996 = W. ECK, *La dipendenza come concetto ambivalente a proposito del rapporto tra patrono e liberto*, in *Tra epigrafia, prosopografia e archeologia. Scritti scelti, rielaborati ed aggiornati*, W. ECK (Ed.), Rome, pp. 165-174.

EHMIG 2013 = U. EHMIG, *Subjektive und faktische Risiken. Votivgründe und Todesursachen in lateinischen Inschriften als Beispiele für Nachrichtenauswahl in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, in *Chiron,* XLIII, pp. 127–198

FANIZZA 1979 = L. FANIZZA, *Il parricidio nel sistema della Lex Pompeia*, in *Labeo*, XXV, pp. 265-289.

FAYER 2005 = C. FAYER, *La familia romana: aspetti giuridici ed antiquari III. Concubinato Divorzio Adulterio*, Rome.

FERRARY 1991 = J. FERRARY, *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis*, in *Athenaeum*, LXXIX, pp. 417-434.

GARIBOTTI 2023 = M. GARIBOTTI, Nullum crimen, nulla poena, sine lege*. Alcune considerazioni sopra la violenza nei confronti delle* uxores in *E pluribus Roma: caleidoscopio storico per comprendere e parlare della pluralità del mondo romano*, M. F. PETRACCIA (Eds.), Genoa, pp. 143-156.

GONZÁLEZ HERRERO 2016 = M. GONZÁLEZ HERRERO, *Epitaph as instrument of accusation against the killer of two Roman women,* in *Conimbriga*, LV, pp. 269-287.

GRAINDOR 1930 = P. GRAINDOR, *Un Milliardaire antique: Hérode Atticus et sa famille*, Cairo.

GUARINO 1974 = A. GUARINO, *In difesa di Messalina*, in *Labeo,* XX, pp.12-26.

GUARINO 1992 = A. GUARINO, *Romolo e l'adulterio*, in *Labeo*, XXXVIII, pp. 319-322.

KLAIBER HERSCH 2020 = K. KLAIBER HERSCH, *Violence in the Roman wedding*, in *The discourse of marriage in the Greco-Roman world,* J. BENEKER, G. TSOUVALA (Eds.), Madison, pp. 68-93.

HARRIS 2001 = W. V. HARRIS, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge.

HELLEGOUARC'H 1990 = J. HELLEGOUARC'H, *Le style de Tacite dans les livres XIII et XIV des Annales,* in *Vita Latina, CXIX*, pp. 29-39.

HELTTULA 2007 = A. HELTTULA (Ed.), *Le iscrizioni sepolcrali latine nell'Isola Sacra*, Rome 2007.

HICKS 2013 = W. HICKS, *The Prosecution of* M. Plautius Silvanus, in *AHB*, XXVII, pp. 55-64.

LAMBERTINI 1992 = R. LAMBERTINI, Dum utrumque occidat. *Lex Iulia e uccisione in continenti degli adulteri* iure patris, Bologna.

LANDUCCI 1898 = L. LANDUCCI, *Lex Pompeia de parricidiis*, in *ArchGiur*, LXI, pp. 304-332.

LENSKI 2016 = N. LENSKI, *Violence and the Roman Slave*, in *The Topography of Violence in the Greco-Roman World*, WERNER RIESS, GARRETT G. FAGAN (Eds.), Ann Arbor, pp. 275–298.

LEVICK 2021 = B. LEVICK, *The Murder of Apronia,* in *New Directions in the Study of Women in the Greco-Roman World*, R. ANCONA, G. TSOUVALA (Eds.), New York, pp. 79-93.

LINDERSKI 1990 = J. LINDERSKI, *The death of Pontia*, in *RhMus,* CXXXIII, pp. 86-93.

LOOPER-FRIEDMAN 1987 = S. LOOPER-FRIEDMAN, *The Decline of Manus-Marriage in Rome*, in *RDH*, LV, pp. 281–296.

LORENZI 1991 = C. LORENZI, Pap. coll. *4.8.1: La figlia adultera e il* ius occidendi iure patris*,* in *SDHI*, LVII, pp. 158-180.

MADEO 2006 = L. MADEO, *Ottavia: La Prima Moglie Di Nerone,* Milan.

MAGGIULLI 1978 = G. MAGGIULLI, *'Saevius Plautus' o 'Plautius Silvanus'?,* in *GIF*, XXX, pp. 73-78.

MANUWALD 2010 = G. MANUWALD, *Die Trauernde Gattin Und Die Ängstliche Geliebte: Octavia Und Poppaea in Der Pseudo-Senecanischen « Octavia »,* in *Gender Studies in den Altertumswissenschaften. Aspekte von Macht und Erotik in der Antike*, B. FEICHTINGER, G. E. KREUZ (Eds.), Trier, pp. 213–225.

MARRONE 2006 = M. MARRONE, *Istituzioni di diritto romano*, Palermo.

MARUZZINO 2013 = S. MARRUZZINO, *La Questione Dell'«Octauia »,* in Vichiana, XV, pp. 87-96.

MAYER 2013 = M. MAYER, *Prae textibus imagines in titulis Latini. La imagen antes del texto. Nuevas consideraciones sobre el símbolo del ascia*, in *SEBarc,* XI, pp. 15-40.

MAYER 1982 = R. MAYER*, What Caused Poppaea's Death?*, in *Historia*, XXXI, pp. 248-249.

MERLI 2015 = A. MERLI, *Violenza di genere e femminicidio,* in *DPC*, I, 2015, pp. 430-468.

MONTANINI 2010 = L. MONTANINI, *Nascita e morte del bambino a Roma*, in *Ager Veleias*, V, pp. 1-26.

MURGATROYD 2008 = P. MURGATROYD, *Tacitus on the Death of Octavia*, in *G&R*, LV, pp. 263-273.

NERI 2016 = V. NERI*, Il marito* dominus *la violenza coniugale nella società tardoantica (a partire da una costituzione di Teodosio II),* in *La famiglia tardoantica. Società, diritto, religione,* V. NERI, B. GIROTTI (Eds.), Milan, pp. 51-78.

PANCIERA 1960 = S. PANCIERA, Deasciare, exacisclare, exasciare a Salona e ad Aquileia, in *Latomus*, XIX, pp. 701-707.

PAOLI 2013 = M. PAOLI, *Femminicidio: i perché di una parola*, available online at the link: http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/lingua-italiana/consulenza-linguistica/domande-risposte/femminicidio-perch-parola

PARCA 2002 = M. PARCA, *Violence by and against Women in Documentary Papyri from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt*, in *Le rôle et le statut de la femme en Égypte Hellénistique, Romaine et Byzantine*, H. MELAERTS, L. MOOREN (Eds.), Paris, pp. 283–296.

PAVÓN TORREJÓN 2006 = P. PAVÓN TORREJÓN, *Mujeres, delitos y condenas en cuatro leyendas romanas*, in *Habis,* XXXVII, pp. 287-300.

PAVÓN TORREJÓN 2010 = P. PAVÓN TORREJÓN, *Pratiche abusive nelle domus regolate dalla legislazione di Adriano (D. 1, 6, 2 e 48, 9, 5),* in *SDHI,* LXXVI, pp. 134-146.

PAVÓN TORREJÓN 2011 = P. PAVÓN TORREJÓN, *El uxoricidio de Iulia Maiana, manu mariti interfecta* (*CIL* XIII, 2182), in *Habis*, LII, pp. 253-262.

PETRACCIA 2007 = M.F. PETRACCIA, *Magistrati municipali uccisi da* Latrones*: il caso di Drobeta (Dacia)*, in *Acta XII congressus internationalis Epigraphiae Graecae et Latinae,* M. MAYER OLIVÉ, G. BARATTA, A. GUZMÁN ALMAGRO (Eds.), Barcelona, pp. 1139-1146.

PLESSIS 1905 = F. PLESSIS, *Epitaphes*, Paris.

POMEROY 2007 = S. POMEROY, *The Murder of Regilla: A Case of Domestic Violence in Antiquity,* Cambridge.

QUESTA 1995 =C. QUESTA, *Messalina,* 'meretrix Augusta', *in Vicende e figure femminili in Grecia e a Roma*, in R. RAFFAELLI (ed.), Ancona, pp.399-423.

QUESTA 1998 =C. QUESTA, *Messalina* 'meretrix Augusta' *e altre donne dei Giulio-Claudi,* in *L'aquila a due teste. Immagini di Roma e dei Romani,* Urbino, pp. 111-136.

RADFORD, RUSSELL 1992 = J. RADFORD, D.E.H RUSSELL, *Femicide. The politics of woman killing*, New York.

ROBLEDA 1976 = O. ROBLEDA, *Cic.* de orat. *1, 40, 183; 56, 283, y el divorcio de Messalina*, in *SDHI*, XLII, pp.424-430.

ROBLEDA 1982 = O. ROBLEDA, *Il divorzio in Roma prima di Costantino*, in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt,* II, 14, Berlin-New York, pp.347-390.

ROGERS 1949 = R.S. ROGERS, *A Criminal Trial of A.D. 70* (Tacitus, Histories*, 4.44*), in *TAPA,* LXXX, pp. 347-350.

RUGGIERO 1984 = A. Ruggiero, *Nuove riflessioni in tema di tribunale domestico*, in *Sodalitas*, IV, pp. 1593-1600.

RUSSELL, HARMES 2001 = D.E.H. RUSSELL, R.A. HARMES, *Femicide in global perspective*, New York – London.

SÁNCHEZ MANZANO 1991 = A. SÁNCHEZ MANZANO, *Estudio estructural de los verbos de la muerte en el latín arcaico y clásico*, León.

SANTALUCIA 1989 = B. SANTALUCIA, *Diritto e processo penale nell'antica Roma*, Milan.

SCHIPANI 1992 = S. SCHIPANI, 'Lex Aquilia'. 'Culpa'. *Responsabilità*, in *Illecito e pena privata in età repubblicana. Atti del convegno internazionale di diritto romano* (Copanello 4-7 giugno 1990), F. MILAZZO (Ed.), Naples, pp. 129-187.

SCHIPANI 1996 = S. SCHIPANI, *Responsabilità "*ex lege Aquilia*", Criteri di imputazione e problema della "*culpa*"*, Turin.

SCHÖNBERGER 1963 = O. SCHÖNBERGER, *Ein Quellenproblem Bei Tacitus Und Lucans Deklamation Über* Octavius Sagitta, in *Historia*, XXII, pp. 500–509.

SOLIN 1987 = H. SOLIN, *Zu Ostiensischen Inscriften*, in *Arctos,* XXI, pp. 119-138

SPINELLI 2006 = B. SPINELLI, a cura di, *Violenza sulle donne: parliamo di femminicidio. Spunti di riflessioni per affrontare a livello globale il problema della violenza sulle donne con una prospettiva di genere*, Bologna.

THOMAS 1981 = Y. THOMAS, *Parricidium*, in *MEFR,* XCIII, 2, pp. 643-715.

TREGGIARI 1991 = S. TREGGIARI, *Roman Marriage:* Iusti Coniuges *from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian*, Oxford.

WALLACE-HADRILL 1989 = A.WALLACE-HADRILL, *Patronage in roman society: from republic to empire*, in *Patronage in Ancient society*, A. WALLACE-HADRILL (Ed.), London, pp. 63-87.

WITZKE 2016 = S.S. WITZKE, *Violence against Women in Ancient Rome. Ideology versus Reality*, in *The Topography of Violence in the Greco-Roman World*, W. RIESS, G. G. FAGAN (Eds.), Ann Arbor, pp. 248-274.

ZANASI 1999 = F. ZANASI, Tartarus furens*. Il provocatorio linguaggio delle epigrafi*, in *Aufidus,* XIII, pp. 149-160.

ZANZUCCHI 1910 = P.P. ZANZUCCHI, *Il divieto delle azioni famose*, in *RISG*, XLVII, pp. 237-302.