

# Texts for Class 1: Extravagantly Real

## *The Coronation of Poppea, scene between Nero and Seneca*

NERO [*entering*]

I am resolved and determined, O Seneca, my master,  
that Ottavia surrender her status as my consort,  
so I shall wed Poppea.

SENECA

My lord, beneath what seems the greatest pleasure,  
there will often lie hidden bleak repentance.  
One's own feelings are profligate advisers  
that hate law and justice and will defy all reason.

NERO

No time for lectures;  
I will, yes I will have it my way!

SENECA

Do not enflame the Senate and the People.

NERO

For the Senate and the People I care not.

SENECA

Care, at least, for yourself, sir, and for your honour.

NERO

Whoever blames, me, I'll have them tear his tongue out!

SENECA

Make all your people dumb, they'll still accuse you.

NERO

Ottavia is both barren and frigid.

SENECA

Those who wish to do wrong search for a pretext.

NERO

My power is law in peacetime,  
just as my sword is in war time...

SENECA

Your power lights the flames of discord,  
and leads to bloodshed.

NERO

...and neither has any need of reason!

SENECA

It is reason, only reason  
that rules the earth and gods in heaven.

NERO

You, you, you!  
You brave my displeasure!  
So in spite of you,  
and in spite of the Senate and of the People,  
and Ottavia and of heaven and of Hades,  
though the laws are against me,  
I am above them, and I say  
tomorrow Poppea shall be my wife.

SENECA

Oh, that a silly woman's power  
should lead you into such a blunder.  
It is not worthy of an Emperor.  
You are a demigod; this is merely plebeian!

NERO

I'll show you what's plebeian, you insolent professor,  
impertinent old pedant! [*exit*]

SENECA [*to himself*]

Now I fear for the worst.  
Always dark is the season,  
when love of power contests the claims of reason.