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978-0-521-70825-8 - Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire

Josiah Osgood

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## CLAUDIUS CAESAR

*Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire*

The story of Claudius has often been told before. Ancient writers saw the emperor as the dupe of his wives and palace insiders; Robert Graves tried to rehabilitate him as a far shrewder, if still frustrated, politician. Josiah Osgood shifts the focus off the personality of Claudius and onto what his tumultuous years in power reveal about the developing political culture of the early Roman Empire. What precedents set by Augustus were followed? What had to be abandoned? How could a new emperor win the support of key elements of Roman society? This richly illustrated discussion draws on a range of newly discovered documents, exploring events that move far beyond the city of Rome and Italy to Egypt and Judea, Morocco and Britain. *Claudius Caesar* provides a new perspective not just on Claudius himself, but on all Roman emperors, the Roman Empire, and the nature of empires more generally.

JOSIAH OSGOOD is Professor of Classics at Georgetown University. His teaching and research touch many areas of Roman history and Latin literature, but focus especially on the late Roman Republic and early Empire. His first book, *Caesar's Legacy: Civil War and the Emergence of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 2006), examined the period after the assassination of Julius Caesar. Osgood has more recently published several articles on Caesar, as well as aspects of Roman family life and education. He is currently finishing a Latin textbook for intermediate and advanced students, *A Suetonius Reader*, and is also co-editing with Susanna Braund *A Companion to Persius and Juvenal*.

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Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema, *A Roman Emperor AD 41* (1871)

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*Georgetown University*



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It was Adam who took me to see for the first time Henry Walters' collections of paintings in Baltimore, including Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's *A Roman Emperor AD 41* (1871), which so brilliantly encapsulates the theme of this book. In that painting is shown not one emperor, but three: Caligula lying dead, Claudius cowering behind a curtain, and, finally, Augustus, who, atop his blood-spattered herm, presides over the whole sordid scene. In 1917, Henry Walters purchased this canvas and added it to his father's collection, a notable piece of which was Gérôme's *The Death of Caesar* (1867), a dramatic depiction of an earlier and seemingly nobler assassination, without soldiers, but Senators, in pristine white togas, their swords raised high. Displayed together now in the Walters Art Gallery, the two works invite the viewer to reflect on how much the Roman world had changed from 44 BC to AD 41. For ten years I have been thinking almost daily about the history encapsulated by this extraordinary pair of paintings – and for all who encourage, or even just put up with, my eccentric interests, I am thankful.

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## *Note on abbreviations*

Ancient authors and their works are cited according to the abbreviations of S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, third edn (Oxford, 1996), with a few self-explanatory exceptions.

Modern reference works are also cited according to the abbreviations of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Note in addition the following:

- LTUR* E. Steinby, *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* (Rome, 1993–2000)  
*RPC* A. Burnett *et al.*, *Roman Provincial Coinage* (London, 1992–)

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Map 1 The Roman Empire in AD 41

