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978-0-521-88181-4 - 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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Frontmatter

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

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Frontmatter

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978-0-521-88181-4 - Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>List of illustrations</i> | <i>page</i> vi |
| <i>List of maps and tables</i> | x |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | xi |
| <i>Note on abbreviations</i> | xiii |
| Prologue: The Roman Empire in AD 41 | I |
| Introduction: The problem of Claudius | 9 |
| 1 Claudius Caesar | 29 |
| 2 A statue in silver | 47 |
| 3 Imperial favors | 69 |
| 4 Subduing the ocean | 84 |
| 5 Lists of peoples and places | 107 |
| 6 Caesar-lovers | 126 |
| 7 The eight-hundredth year of Rome | 147 |
| 8 Practical pyramids | 168 |
| 9 The burden of government | 190 |
| 10 The judgment of Pallas | 206 |
| 11 Signaling retreat? | 225 |
| 12 The golden predicament | 242 |
| <i>Notes</i> | 260 |
| <i>Bibliography</i> | 322 |
| <i>Index</i> | 351 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88181-4 - Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire

Josiah Osgood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Illustrations*

| | |
|--|---------|
| Frontispiece: Sir Laurence Alma-Tadema, <i>A Roman Emperor AD 41</i> (1871) | |
| 1 Portrait of Germanicus. Louvre, Paris. (Photo Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY) | page 10 |
| 2 Title page of <i>I, Claudius</i> by Robert Graves. (Photo author's collection) | 20 |
| 3 Portrait of Livia. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. (Photo Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen) | 21 |
| 4 Portrait of Augustus. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. (Photo Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen) | 22 |
| 5 <i>Aureus</i> (RIC I [second edn] Claudius no. 7). (Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum / Art Resource, NY) | 34 |
| 6 <i>Aureus</i> (RIC I [second edn] Claudius no. 11). (Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum / Art Resource, NY) | 35 |
| 7 <i>Aureus</i> (RIC I [second edn] Claudius no. 9). (Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum / Art Resource, NY) | 35 |
| 8 <i>Denarius</i> (RIC I [second edn] Claudius no. 6). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 36 |
| 9 <i>Denarius</i> (RIC I [second edn] Claudius no. 14). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 36 |
| 10 Portrait of Claudius. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel. (Photo Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY) | 52 |
| 11 Portrait of Claudius. Vatican Museums, Rome. (Photo Alinari / Art Resource, NY) | 53 |
| 12 Portrait of Claudius. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. (Photo Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen) | 54 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88181-4 - Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire
Josiah Osgood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

| <i>List of illustrations</i> | | vii |
|------------------------------|--|-----|
| 13 | Portrait of Claudius, profile. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. (Photo Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen) | 55 |
| 14 | <i>Aureus</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Claudius no. 23). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 56 |
| 15 | <i>Denarius</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Claudius no. 66). (Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum / Art Resource, NY) | 57 |
| 16 | <i>Aureus</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Claudius no. 67). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 57 |
| 17 | <i>Dupondius</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Claudius no. 101). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 58 |
| 18 | Relief of sacrificial procession, detail. Vatican Museums, Rome. (Photo Vanni / Art Resource, NY) | 59 |
| 19 | Relief of sacrificial procession, detail. Vatican Museums, Rome. (Photo Vanni / Art Resource, NY) | 60 |
| 20 | <i>Aureus</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Claudius no. 71). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 61 |
| 21 | Fragment of an altar frieze. Museo Nazionale, Ravenna. (Photo Scala / Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali / Art Resource, NY) | 63 |
| 22 | Fragment of an altar frieze. Museo Nazionale, Ravenna. (Photo Scala / Art Resource, NY) | 64 |
| 23 | Inscription from the Arch of Claudius. Capitoline Museums, Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 95 |
| 24 | <i>Aureus</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Claudius no. 33). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 96 |
| 25 | Relief of soldiers. Louvre, Paris. (Photo Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY) | 97 |
| 26 | Relief of sacrificial procession. Villa Medici, Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 98 |
| 27 | Relief of sacrifice before the Temple of Mars the Avenger. Villa Medici, Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 99 |
| 28 | Relief of priest. Villa Medici, Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 100 |
| 29 | Relief from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias: Claudius and Britannia. (Photo New York University Excavations at Aphrodisias) | 104 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88181-4 - Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire

Josiah Osgood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

List of illustrations

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 30 | Statue of Claudius. Archeological Museum, Naples. (Photo Alinari / Art Resource, NY) | 141 |
| 31 | Statue of Augustus. Archeological Museum, Naples. (Photo Alinari / Art Resource, NY) | 142 |
| 32 | Statue of Claudius, in the guise of Jupiter. Vatican Museums, Rome. (Photo Scala / Art Resource, NY) | 144 |
| 33 | <i>Denarius</i> (<i>RIC</i> I [second edn] Augustus no. 340). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 153 |
| 34 | Statue of Claudius, seated. Vatican Museums, Rome. (Photo Alinari / Art Resource, NY) | 157 |
| 35 | Relief of sacrificial procession. Louvre, Paris. (Photo Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY) | 160 |
| 36 | Travertine boundary-stone. Antiquarium Comunale di Celio, Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 162 |
| 37 | Aqua Claudia / Aqua Anio Novus. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 176 |
| 38 | Servian Wall of Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 177 |
| 39 | Porta Maggiore of Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 178 |
| 40 | Scale model of Rome, detail. Museum of Roman Civilization, Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 179 |
| 41 | Aqua Virgo. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 181 |
| 42 | <i>Dupondius</i> (<i>RIC</i> I [second edn] Claudius no. 94). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 183 |
| 43 | <i>Sestertius</i> (<i>RIC</i> I [second edn] Nero no. 178). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 184 |
| 44 | Portico of Port of Claudius at Ostia. (Photo Fig. 20 in G. Lugli and G. Filibeck, <i>Il porto di Roma imperiale e l'agro portuense</i> [Bergamo, 1935]) | 185 |
| 45 | Silver didrachm of Caesarea in Cappadocia (<i>RPC</i> 1.3627). (Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum / Art Resource, NY) | 207 |
| 46 | <i>Sestertius</i> (<i>RIC</i> I [second edn] Claudius no. 99). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 208 |
| 47 | <i>Denarius</i> (<i>RIC</i> I [second edn] Claudius no. 81). (Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum / Art Resource, NY) | 217 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88181-4 - Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire
Josiah Osgood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

| <i>List of illustrations</i> | | ix |
|------------------------------|---|-----|
| 48 | <i>Aureus</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Claudius no. 82). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 217 |
| 49 | Portrait of Agrippina. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. (Photo Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen) | 218 |
| 50 | Portrait of Nero. Louvre, Paris. (Photo Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY) | 220 |
| 51 | Relief from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias: Agrippina and Claudius. (Photo New York University Excavations at Aphrodisias) | 221 |
| 52 | Gemma Claudia. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. (Photo Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY) | 222 |
| 53 | <i>Aureus</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Claudius no. 76). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 230 |
| 54 | <i>Denarius</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Claudius no. 79). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 230 |
| 55 | Bronze coin of Corinth (<i>RPC I.1183</i>). (Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum / Art Resource, NY) | 232 |
| 56 | Relief from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias: two princes. (Photo New York University Excavations at Aphrodisias) | 234 |
| 57 | <i>Denarius</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Nero no. 2). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 246 |
| 58 | <i>Denarius</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Nero no. 7). (Photo courtesy of the American Numismatic Society) | 247 |
| 59 | Relief from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias: Nero and Agrippina. (Photo New York University Excavations at Aphrodisias) | 248 |
| 60 | <i>Aureus</i> (<i>RIC I</i> [second edn] Nero no. 4). (Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum / Art Resource, NY) | 251 |
| 61 | Temple of Divine Claudius, Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 252 |
| 62 | Scale model of Rome, detail. Museum of Roman Civilization, Rome. (Photo Fototeca Unione, American Academy in Rome) | 253 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88181-4 - Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire

Josiah Osgood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Maps and Tables*

MAPS

| | | |
|---|--|--------------------|
| 1 | The Roman Empire in AD 41 | <i>page</i> xiv-xv |
| 2 | Mauretania | III |
| 3 | Lycia and environs | 116 |
| 4 | Thrace and environs | 123 |
| 5 | Claudius' construction projects in Italy | 186 |

TABLES

| | | |
|---|--|-----|
| 1 | The family of Augustus | 12 |
| 2 | Distribution of legions on accession of Claudius | 33 |
| 3 | Estimate of notional gross annual expenses for the early imperial government | 37 |
| 4 | Major (and a few minor) officials of the early imperial government, c. AD 50 | 194 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88181-4 - *Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire*

Josiah Osgood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88181-4 - Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire
Josiah Osgood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

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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.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88181-4 - Claudius Caesar: Image and Power in the Early Roman Empire

Josiah Osgood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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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Josiah Osgood

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Map 1 The Roman Empire in AD 41

