



# Suetonius the Biographer: Studies in Roman Lives

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The biographer Suetonius is one of the most fascinating writers of ancient Rome, but he is rarely afforded serious critical attention. This volume of new essays focuses on the various aspects of Suetonius' work, from his lost biographical writing on Roman courtesans to his imperial portraits of the Caesars.

Beginning with an introduction that assesses the originality of Suetonius as a writer and situates the essays within the context of debates and controversies over his biographical form, the collection addresses the issues surrounding his style, themes, and early influence on literature in three parts. The first part discusses formal features of Suetonian biography, such as his literary techniques, manners of citation and quotation, and devices of allusion and closure. The middle section is devoted to readings of the individual *Lives*, treating several topics - from Suetonius' decision to begin his collection with Julius Caesar, to fictional elements in his death scene of the emperor Caligula, and to the theme of solitude in his *Life of Domitian*. The last part examines the ways in which Suetonius transgresses the boundaries of ancient biography by looking at his influence on epistolographers, antiquarians, commentators, and later biographers.

This volume is essential reading for anyone who wants to know why Suetonius' *Lives* are such a unique and powerful medium for the stories of ancient Rome, and how they became the primary model for later biography.

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### Review

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"Tristan Power and Roy Gibson, the editors of this new collection of thirteen lively essays, *Suetonius the Biographer*, seek to put the author in the spotlight by directing the critical focus squarely back to his craft as a biographer. By meeting Suetonius on his own terms, the contributors aim to clarify how and why he is an innovative writer still worth reading today...as this stimulating collection of essays demonstrates, looking below the surface of Suetonius's text into the inner workings of the author's mind is richly rewarding." --Rhiannon Ash, *Times Literary Supplement*

"excellent collection of essays...There are no weak links in the essays, and the choice of material is a thought-provoking pointer to how those Suetonian times have changed...The volume as a whole is certainly an important further step in dismantling that caricature, and all readers and browsers will learn a lot." --Christopher Pelling, *Classical Review*

"[T]he most thorough and successful attempt to date to recover Suetonius as an innovative biographer...This is an unusually excellent edited volume. While diverse and occasionally divergent, the papers overall make a strong case for the artful biographer. Their thoughtful arrangement, along with Power's introduction, enhances their impact. Established fans of Suetonius will cheer, and new ones should join them." --Josiah Osgood, *Sehepunkte*

"this engaging volume succeeds in advancing our understanding of Suetonius...The thirteen essays are well-edited and coherently organized, concluding with a rich bibliography and generous indexes. Scholars and students interested in biography and early imperial history will want to take note of this stimulating publication." --Salvador Bartera, *Classical World*

"Power and Gibson and their contributors have given us what is often a demanding read, but certainly something that for students of Suetonius demands to be read." --David Wardle, *Histos*

"a welcome addition to English-language scholarship on Suetonius, his literary style, his contributions to the genre of biography and his subsequent reception...the editors have done a good job of establishing connections between the chapters and teasing out key themes that should inform and enrich our assessment of Suetonius in future scholarship...attentive readers will return to Suetonius more thoughtfully and cautiously in future sittings." --Mark Bradley, *Journal of Roman Studies*

#### About the Author

**Tristan Power** has taught Classics at the University of Reading. His publications include a chapter on Suetonius' *Illustrious Men* in K. De Temmerman and K. Demoen (eds.), *Telling Ancient Lives: Narrative Technique and Fictionalization in Greek and Latin Biography* (forthcoming).

**Roy K. Gibson** is Professor of Latin at the University of Manchester. His publications include *Ovid: Ars Amatoria Book 3* (2003) and (with R. Morello) *Reading the Letters of Pliny the Younger: An Introduction* (2012).

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