

David Wardle

Suetonius Life of Augustus

Suetonius: Life of Augustus (Oxford University Press, 2014) is a comprehensive, historical, historiographical and literary commentary in English on the biography of Rome's first emperor, Augustus, that was written in the second century AD. It is the first scholarly commentary to be accessible to readers without any knowledge of Latin or Greek through its use of English lemmata, while the new translation remains faithful to the original Latin. It is the third volume by David Wardle in Oxford University Press's prestigious Clarendon Ancient History Series.

The biographer and scholar, C. Suetonius Tranquillus, who rose from relative obscurity in what is modern day Algeria to serve at the head of the Roman civil service, used his knowledge of the job of an emperor to create an evaluative framework which he employed for the first biographies of Rome's emperors. This commentary examines the complex picture that Suetonius drew, showing how the biographer used official records, contemporary propaganda and the reactions of ordinary people to evaluate Augustus, and assesses the reliability of the account that he generates. Augustus completed the overthrow of Rome's traditional form of government and initiated a form of hereditary monarchy, but, nonetheless, emerged with a reputation as a statesman. Suetonius' analysis reveals what Romans believed about how an autocrat should exercise power. This commentary crucially examines Suetonius' work not just as a repository of facts, but as a literary artefact carefully constructed by its author

Reviewers have described *Suetonius. Life of Augustus* as "likely to be the first port of call on the subject for many years to come", "an invaluable resource", "absolutely invaluable" and "un ouvrage en tous points remarquables, qui constitue de loin le meilleur commentaire de la *Vie d'Auguste* à ce jour" [transl.: 'a work that is remarkable in every respect, which constitutes by far the best commentary on the *Life of Augustus* to this day'].