

Domitian's Rome and the Augustan Legacy

The legacy of the Roman emperor Augustus and the culture of his age was profound and immediately evident after his death in 14 CE. His first four successors based their claims to rule on kinship with him, thus establishing the Julio-Claudian dynasty (14–68 CE), and plied an evolving form of the Principate, the political arrangement Augustus carved out for himself. His building and restoration programs gave the city an “Augustan” appearance that remained relatively unchanged throughout subsequent reigns. And, among literary luminaries of his age, figures such as Horace and Ovid left an indelible mark on the poetic practices of future generations while Virgil insinuated himself still more deeply into the Roman psyche. But it was after the reigns of Augustus’ own descendants, oddly enough, that we witness the most spirited and thoroughgoing engagement with the Augustan past; during the reign of the emperor Domitian, the third and last ruler of the subsequent Flavian dynasty (81–96 CE), there was a veritable Augustan renaissance.

This volume represents the first book-length treatment of the reception of Augustus and his age during the reign of Domitian. Its thirteen chapters, authored by an international group of scholars, offer readers a glimpse into the fascinating history and culture of Domitian’s Rome and its multifaceted engagement with the Augustan past. Combining material and literary cultural approaches and covering a diverse range of topics—art, architecture, literature, history, law—the studies in this volume capture the rich complexity of the Augustan legacy in Domitian’s Rome while also revising our understanding of Domitian’s own legacy. Far from being the cruel tyrant history has made him out to be, Domitian emerges as a studious, thoughtful cultivator of the Augustan past who helped shape an age that not only took inspiration from that past, but managed to rival it.

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