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WITH THE DEATH of Caligula the senators could enjoy a brief moment of euphoria. Once again, for the first time in living memory they felt about to be called upon to play the great role that had been theirs during the Republic, answerable in a vague sense to the Roman people, but at the whim and mercy of no single individual. They were convened on the Capitol by the consuls. This had happened also after the deaths of Augustus and Tiberius, but on this occasion the consuls' role was seen as more than a mere formality, but almost a declaration of newly regained independence.<sup>1</sup> The consuls also took the precaution of transferring funds from the treasures (presumably the Atrarium Saturni in the Temple of Saturn in the forum) to the Capitol, and set guards over them.<sup>2</sup> The senators seem to have been full of confidence.<sup>3</sup> A decree charging Caligula with unspecified crimes was passed, and there were even demands that all the Caesars be condemned to *damnatio memoriae* and their temples destroyed. There was, of course, an element of self-interest in the apparent senatorial idealism. They no doubt appreciated that the ending of the imperial system would, in fact, lead to a restoration of their own powers and privileges, a development foreseen also by the Praetorians and the people. Josephus comments that the kind of government they would have instituted was an 'aristocracy, as the government of old had been,' and notes that they met in a spirit of excessive arrogance, as if power already lay within their hands.

While the senators were congratulating themselves, the ordinary people were expressing their anger. As was soon to become apparent, there was considerable distress over the death of Caligula and a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the idea of a return to the republican system and to the privileges of the old nobility.<sup>4</sup> A noisy meeting took place in the forum, with angry demands from the crowd for the identity of the assassins, and the tension was increased by disorderly soldiers roaming about.<sup>5</sup>

The key to the future, however, lay neither with the senate nor the people, but with the Praetorian guard. The precise course of events from this point is far from certain, as we have to rely on Josephus' detailed but often jumbled account, which seems to be an inconsistent pastiche

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of two different versions. In the first version the Praetorians had a coherent plan of action from the outset. After the murder they gathered together to work out what steps to take to maintain their privileged position. Convinced that the principate would be retained in some form or other, they were determined that it fall to a candidate of their own choosing. Only one name seems to have been considered, Caligula's uncle Claudius, who as son of Drusus and brother of Germanicus would have enjoyed the prestige of a distinguished family name, and they went to the palace to seek him. But in his description of the actual events at the palace, Josephus clearly used a different source, one followed in the main also by Suetonius and Dio, that implied that the Praetorian action was much more spontaneous, even accidental. The earlier plan of the Praetorians is now forgotten.<sup>6</sup> We are told that after the murder, Claudius fled in panic to the palace, where he hid himself in an alcove of a room called by Suetonius the *Hermæum* ('chamber sacred to Hermes'). This use of the Greek name 'Hermes' for a sanctuary dedicated to the Roman Mercury is very unusual, and the room may have been named after the *Hermæa* found in Egypt, at Hermopolis or Alexandria, dedicated to Hermes-Thoth. It could be that Claudius was hiding in the *Aula Isiaca*, the room decorated with mythical Egyptian (but not necessarily Isiac) motifs in the east wing of the original palace complex, and later incorporated into the Flavian palace (p. 221).<sup>7</sup> He was found there by one of the soldiers, named by Josephus as Gratus. Claudius apparently thought at first that he was about to be put to death for killing Caligula. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Gratus, we are led to believe, had the brainwave of persuading his fellow soldiers to acclaim Caligula's uncle as emperor. They then led the much-relieved Claudius out of the palace, to the large area open to the public on the north of the Germalus, the Arva Palatini. Bystanders who saw the incident misread it, and thought that Claudius was being taken off to his death. Misleading reports of this incident may well have reached the senators, and could account for their overconfidence during the latter part of this first day.<sup>8</sup> In Josephus' second version it was not until this point that the Praetorians as a body determined to make Claudius emperor, influenced by the still powerful force of Germanicus' name and the patent ambition of some of the powerful senators. Above all, there was the fear that even if the imperial system continued, someone might seize power independently of them. Convinced by their own logic, the Praetorians took Claudius off to their camp at the Porta Viminalis. This second version is reflected also in the accounts of both Suetonius and Dio, who stress the chance discovery of Claudius by Praetorians who simply happened to be in the palace, prowling about or seeking plunder.<sup>9</sup> As Suetonius puts it, Claudius became emperor *mirabili casu*, 'by an astonishing accident'.

Whichever is the true version of events on the Palatine the aftermath

is clear enough. Once Claudius was secure in their camp, they acclaimed him as emperor. Reports of this began to reach the senate, where the consul Saturninus advised a firm line against Claudius, and delivered a lengthy speech, praising Chærea and extolling the notion of liberty.<sup>10</sup> Again, it was liberty in a limited sense, since he seems to have been mainly concerned with the suffering of the nobility, and spoke of the history of threats to *to genatio* (the nobility).<sup>11</sup> It is hard to believe that Saturninus, whose family had done so well under the principate, was moved by the republican ideals described so glowingly by Josephus, who adds two anecdotes that might confirm our scepticism. During the course of his speech it was noticed that Saturninus was still wearing a signet ring with the image of Caligula; Trebellius Maximus rose, tore it from his finger and smashed it to the ground. More seriously, Josephus admits that despite his public posture and pretence of unwillingness, Saturninus was really a candidate for the principate himself!

In the meantime Claudius received a new visitor. Herod Agrippa had initially gone to the Esquiline to tend to the body of Caligula. From there he made his way to the nearby praetorian camp at the Porta Viminalis. Agrippa had a keen political eye, and appreciated at once the strength of Claudius' position. Characteristically, he had no hesitation in enlisting himself firmly on what he saw as the winning side.<sup>12</sup> He urged Claudius to stand firm, then went on to the senate, pretending to arrive casually from a banquet (suggesting that the meeting of the senate was probably taking place on the evening of the assassination). Once there he sought to impress upon the members the hopelessness of trying to take a military stand against Claudius and the powerful Praetorians.

A compromise was eventually arranged, that Agrippa would accompany a deputation of 'men of lofty character', to try to reason with Claudius.<sup>13</sup> By now night had fallen. Josephus relates that when Chærea asked for the watchword and the consuls gave the reply of '*Libertas*' the symbolism was not lost on the spectators, who realized that the watchword had at last passed back to the consuls a century after their liberty had been lost (dating this event to 59 BC, the first consulship of Julius Caesar).<sup>14</sup>

Despite their apparent bravado the senators must have realized their impotence. Next day, when they reconvened, a mere one hundred turned up. They now accepted that the imperial system could not be abolished, and in an air of unreality proceeded to debate who would be the best candidate, wasting further time on fruitless bickering. As noted earlier the consul Saturninus was one man who made a bid. There were at least two other candidates, Marcus Vinicius, the husband of Livilla, who was discouraged by the consuls, and Valerius Asiaticus whose candidacy was blocked by Vinicianus. We have no idea what role, if any, Vinicius might have played in the assassination. As noted earlier, despite the apparent

involvement of his wife in the conspiracy of 39, his name is nowhere associated with the events of that year. His marriage connection would make him an appropriate candidate, but he had a reputation for being amiable and unambitious, and his apparent lack of drive might explain why the consuls deemed him unsuitable (one of them, of course, had ambitions of his own). Asiaticus had addressed the people immediately after Caligula's death, and his ambiguous assertion that he wished that he could claim to be the assassin might have been an attempt to play a double game, evading responsibility before the people but seeking to establish his credentials before the senate (and history). The reason for Vinicianus' opposition to Asiaticus is not clear. The general scholarly view is that he had entertained his own personal ambitions at the outset, but felt the need to hold back for appearances' sake. But by this time he may well have felt that events had overtaken him, and having allowed the opportunity to slip from his own hands could not bear to see another candidate succeed.<sup>15</sup> It may be, however, that he had decided to throw his support behind his relative Vinicius, and indeed one reading of Josephus' manuscripts (so corrupt at this point that lengthy speculation is fruitless) would have Vinicianus supporting Vinicius against the consular opposition.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to assess Suetonius' claim that Galba, the future emperor, was urged to make a bid but expressed a preference for the quiet life. He would, presumably, have been in Germany, and could have received news of the assassination only after Claudius had become firmly established.<sup>17</sup>

The senatorial deliberations were in fact pointless, and the deputation sent to Claudius failed utterly in its original purpose. Immediately on their arrival they would have seen the enormous military advantage that Claudius enjoyed over the senate. Any hope of bluffing him was negated by Agrippa who advised his old friend of the disunity and weakness of his opposition. On coming into Claudius' presence, according to Josephus, they fell on their knees before him. Claudius had taken concrete measures to strengthen his position among the Praetorians. He administered an oath of loyalty to the troops, made more attractive, no doubt, by an enormous donative, 15,000 or 20,000 sesterces, depending on the source, but a massive amount in any case, and a proportionate amount for each officer. Similar sums were apparently promised for the legions.<sup>18</sup> Although Suetonius claims that Claudius established a precedent in fostering the loyalty of the soldiers by bribes, this is true only in a narrow technical sense. In essence Caligula had made the same gesture when on the death of Tiberius he added to the sum bequeathed to the troops an equal sum from his own funds. That Augustus and Tiberius had left money for the soldiers in their wills is not strictly relevant; what was significant was that Caligula had provided money in anticipation of future services, and it might even be argued that his father Germanicus had done the same.

in using the money under his personal control in Germany to bribe the mutineers after the death of Augustus. Claudius may have taken another measure at this time to strengthen his position, by the appointment of Rufius Pollio, and possibly Catonius Iustus, as Prefects of the guard.<sup>19</sup> All of this would have had an unsettling effect on the senators, not helped by the shouts of the people outside the house calling for the retention of the principate, and even calling for Claudius by name. Despite the urgent pleas of Chaerea, the remaining soldiers abandoned the cause and drifted over to join the Praetorians. The senators then began to quarrel and to blame one another for the calamity. They also began to move over to Claudius. When Quintus Pomponius Secundus, Saturninus' colleague in the consulship went to his side, it marked the end of any serious opposition.<sup>20</sup> Claudius was escorted to the Palatine, and the remaining senators summoned before him (he did not attend a formal senate meeting for thirty days). The speed and thoroughness with which the resistance had collapsed is illustrated by the apparent ease with which he persuaded them to condemn the hapless Chaerea. For all the praise that had been heaped on him, no one seems to have spoken on his behalf when his fate was put to the vote. He was condemned, and forced to commit suicide, which he did bravely. Claudius recognized that he owed his own elevation in no small degree to Chaerea, but also saw the danger in the precedent of regicide. Others died with him, but the only one identified is Lupus.<sup>21</sup> Surprisingly, Chaerea's fellow tribune Sabinus was neither charged nor dismissed from his office, although he committed suicide not long after. Others involved were pardoned, and some reputedly even attained high office.

Claudius succeeded in taking power within twenty-four hours of his nephew's death, in an operation that was so remarkably smooth that it provokes questions about the possible role of Claudius himself, or at least of those around him. Although none of the sources speaks of his direct involvement, Josephus does reflect a tradition that his rise to power did come about through a cohesive plan, at least in the immediate aftermath of the assassination. Could this plan also have preceded the assassination? The supposedly chance discovery of Claudius in the Palace could well have been deliberately arranged, as Josephus' alternative source seems to suggest. If we apply an appropriate scepticism to Josephus' notion that the participants were motivated by the ideals of liberty, we must wonder why several tribunes and at least one Prefect of the Praetorian guard should have become involved in a plot to restore a system that would have reduced their own privileges. Even more baffling is the conduct of Callistus. As an imperial freedman he would hardly have hoped to benefit under a restored republic, and his switching of allegiance to Claudius, whom he saw as Caligula's successor, betrays a foresight that is, literally, incredible. In a later context Tacitus refers tantalisingly to an earlier

reference (now lost) that implies that Callistus played an important role in Caligula's murder. He was certainly well rewarded by Caligula's successor. He became a *libellis* to Claudius, and went on to become even richer than before. Pliny comments that the four small onyx columns erected by Cornelius Balbus in his theatre caused a sensation, but that he had personally seen no fewer than thirty columns of the same material, and large ones at that, in Callistus' dining room.<sup>22</sup>

The plot was a complex one involving many individuals acting in some cases out of idealism, in others out of self-interest. But there may have been at its centre a small group who had a clear idea of where events should lead, and who were happy to exploit and manipulate others, like Chaerea, to their own ends. The Praetorian guard and the imperial freedmen would not have served their self-interest by abolishing the principate. They might, however, have seen the merit of removing a specific princeps whose behaviour threatened to discredit the whole institution, and of replacing him by a more suitable incumbent. Claudius may or may not himself have been a party to such a plot from the outset, but he would in any case have been anxious to prevent any general knowledge about it afterwards, and to foster the notion that the principate came to him only by an accidental twist of fate.<sup>23</sup>

A serious decision facing Claudius on his accession was the official attitude to be adopted towards his predecessor. The resentment felt by the nobility towards Caligula would take time to abate, and he clearly needed to be sensitive to the strength of their feelings. The books of the freedman Protophages, along with the papers that Caligula pretended he had burnt but had kept in the palace, were destroyed, and Protophages himself was put to death. Poisons that had been stored in the palace were also destroyed. Caligula's *acta* were rescinded, and his name, like that of Tiberius, was taken from the lists of emperors mentioned in oaths and prayers.<sup>24</sup>

Yet Claudius was prepared to go only so far. When the senate attempted to declare Caligula a *hostis* and to subject him to an official *damnatio memoriae*, as they would do later to Nero, Claudius blocked the attempt.<sup>25</sup> His reasons would have been twofold. It would clearly have been dangerous to condone an act of regicide, which might have provided a precedent for malcontents during his own reign. Moreover, Claudius had to keep in mind the feelings of ordinary people. Caligula had enjoyed considerable popular support and the newly established emperor would hardly have wished overtly to risk alienating a large segment of the population. Thus there was no official *damnatio memoriae*. But on the other side of the delicate balance Claudius needed to show that Caligula's assassination came about largely as the result of his own shortcomings, not because the office of princeps deserved to be eliminated. Apart from this, Claudius seems himself to have been subjected to a certain amount

of personal humiliation by Caligula towards the end of the reign. This helps to explain why he set out on a subtle campaign of denigrating his predecessor, a campaign that would continue throughout his reign.<sup>26</sup> Thus the inscription recording the repair by Claudius of an arch of the Aqua Virgo makes the point that it had been damaged by Caligula. He seems to have removed Caligula's name as the dedicator of the repaired Theatre of Pompey, and to have taken the credit for Caligula's victories in Mauretania.<sup>27</sup> This 'smear' campaign began soon after Caligula's death, when, on his own initiative (as distinct from a senatorial decree), Claudius ordered that the statues of Caligula, over which the senate had ironically at one stage set a guard, be demolished stealthily at night. A similar fate would be meted out to the statues of Nero's wife Poppaea and his mother Agrippina after their deaths, but significantly in Caligula's case it could not be carried out in the open.<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting to note that the head of the fine togate statue of Caligula now in Virginia seems to have been removed by deliberate chiselling.<sup>29</sup> The sculpted bodies could, of course, be recycled as other Romans, and one of the statues from the shrine at Velleia seems to be made up of the head of Claudius on the body of Caligula. A small bronze bust in private possession which Jucker has identified as Caligulan shows signs of deliberate disfigurement. Its eyes were hacked out and the face mutilated by a metal object on the nose and lips. It was then thrown into the Tiber.<sup>30</sup> There are some inscriptions where Caligula's name has been erased, but they are not numerous enough to prove anything beyond local spontaneous action. Within Italy they are found in Milan, Bologna, Pompeii, from the rest of the empire in Dalmatia, Africa, Egypt, Asia (Samos).<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps the most intriguing issue is Claudius' treatment of his predecessor's coinage. In the context of the honours paid to Claudius for his victory over Britain in 43, two years after the assassination, Dio states that the senate, in hatred of the memory of Caligula, decreed that all the bronze coinage bearing his image should be melted down. The bronze was supposed to have been converted to no better purpose since Mesalina used it to make statues of the actor Mnester to reward him for satisfying her lust.<sup>32</sup> It is curious that if such a measure was enacted it should have been postponed for two years. Of course since Claudius took power quickly such a measure might have been difficult to implement at the very beginning of the reign because it might have led to a currency shortage, and Caligulan bronzes would have had to remain in circulation. D. Nony has even shown that in Gaul local mints may have continued after 41 to issue bronze asses with a portrait of Caligula rather than Claudius, perhaps to 43, when the demonetization might have been ordered.<sup>33</sup>

Wholesale demonetization of Caligula's *aes* coinage seems implausible,

but not impossible.<sup>34</sup> Scholars often cite in this context Statius, who, writing towards the end of the century, describes an article bought very cheaply *plus minusse Gaiano* ('for about a Caligulan as').<sup>35</sup> This abusive phrase might at first sight suggest that the Caligulan as had been debased, but there is no evidence of any decline in *aes* standard in Caligula's coinage; there may in fact have been a slight improvement.<sup>36</sup> But the Statius passage need not consequently indicate out and out demonetization. To emphasize the cheapness of certain second hand books bought as a gift, costing only an as, Statius wants simply to show how despicably low an amount the as represents. 'Gaian' may thus be merely a generally pejorative term.

The argument for demonetization has received some support from the scarcity of coins in hoards with Caligula's image, even though contemporary coins of Germanicus, Agrippina and Agrippa are numerous enough. The Pozzarello hoard, near Bolsena, for instance contains 719 copper and orichalcum coins from the Republic to Nerva, but no *aes* of Caligula in any denomination.<sup>37</sup> The scarcity is not, however, confined to bronze (casting doubt on the Mesalina story, if doubt be needed). It applies also to precious metals. Three hoards from various areas of the empire illustrate this. At Bredgar, in Kent, which Carson dates to 43 and associates with the Claudian invasion, the *aurei* number Tiberius 19, Claudius 4, Caligula 0.<sup>38</sup> The hoard of *aurei* discovered in 1976 in Patras Greece, dated after 47 revealed Tiberius 22, Caligula 2, Claudius 11.<sup>39</sup> A hoard from Pudukota in India, probably Flavian, shows Tiberius 169, Claudius 132, Caligula 14.<sup>40</sup> The evidence is far from simple however. The coin list from the early conquest fort at Hod Hill in Dorset shows a marked preponderance of Caligulan 'Vesta' dupondii relative to the issues of other reigns. The fort does, of course, have a very brief period of occupation, and the contrast with Bredgar might be explained by the longer time it would take to demonetize *aes* coinage.<sup>41</sup>

Countermarks common on other reigns occur rarely on Caligulan coins. The mark NCAPR attributed to the mid-years of Nero and found on sestertii from the beginning of Tiberius' reign until Claudius, is never found on bronzes with the head of Caligula. The inference might be that many of the sestertii of Caligula had been withdrawn by the time the countermark was applied. There were exceptions. There is, for instance, a group of Caligula's Vesta asses with the countermark TTCA (Tiberius Claudius Augustus) employed in such a way to obliterate the *praenomen* and *nomen* C [i.e. Gaius] Caesar. It has been suggested that this was done in Gaul for the use of soldiers on the Rhine, where Claudius would have felt the need to assert his authority.<sup>42</sup> There are also coins where whole Claudian types have been overstruck on Caligulan. Thus we find a restrike of Caligula's asses with the Pallas type of Claudius (BMC 140) on Caligulan asses (BMC 45)<sup>43</sup> Whether the mint of Rome was involved

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in such overstriking, or whether it involved only the local imitations is uncertain, and the value of these pieces as evidence for demonetization is dubious, since Giard observes that Tiberian coins were also overstruck, sometimes by Caligulan types!<sup>44</sup> At a much simpler level there exist several coins that manifest attempts to deface Caligula's image with a chisel. There is also a relatively high proportion of Caligulan coins where individual letters from the name have been removed (such as the C standing for the praenomen Gaius), as a means of obliterating his identity.<sup>45</sup>

There is no clear consensus on whether an actual demonetization was carried out. That such a policy can not be considered totally unfeasible is suggested by the decision of Vitellius not to demonetize the coinage of his immediate predecessors.<sup>46</sup> While an immediate and wholesale recall would hardly be a practical proposition, it may be that after a couple of years, when feelings had grown less intense, Caligulan coins were routinely melted down and restruck as they came into official hands, particularly in the military zones, in a gradual process.

History has been unkind to Caligula largely because he deserves to be thus treated. But there can be little doubt that his successor, probably for personal rather than political reasons, was determined, by both overt and subtle means, to suppress any lingering trace of kind memory that Caligula might have enjoyed. The treatment that Claudius seems to have meted out to the physical reminders of Caligula gives us some idea of the impact that the new emperor might have had on the written record.

