



Rome: An Empire's Story

By Greg Woolf

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The very idea of empire was created in ancient Rome and even today traces of its monuments, literature, and institutions can be found across Europe, the Near East, and North Africa--and sometimes even further afield.

In *Rome*, historian Greg Woolf expertly recounts how this mammoth empire was created, how it was sustained in crisis, and how it shaped the world of its rulers and subjects--a story spanning a millennium and a half of history. The personalities and events of Roman history have become part of the West's cultural lexicon, and Woolf provides brilliant retellings of each of these, from the war with Carthage to Octavian's victory over Cleopatra, from the height of territorial expansion under the emperors Trajan and Hadrian to the founding of Constantinople and the barbarian invasions which resulted in Rome's ultimate collapse. Throughout, Woolf carefully considers the conditions that made Rome's success possible and so durable, covering topics as diverse as ecology, slavery, and religion. Woolf also compares Rome to other ancient empires and to its many later imitators, bringing into vivid relief the Empire's most distinctive and enduring features.

As Woolf demonstrates, nobody ever planned to create a state that would last more than a millennium and a half, yet Rome was able, in the end, to survive barbarian migrations, economic collapse and even the conflicts between a series of world religions that had grown up within its borders, in the process generating an image and a myth of empire that is apparently indestructible. Based on new research and compellingly told, this sweeping account promises to eclipse all previously published histories of the empire.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This latest volume from Professor Greg Woolf is a marvelous synthesis of the scholarship of, primarily, the last four decades on Rome's imperial successes and failures, rendered in an approachable and affable style of writing that is imbued throughout with useful anecdotes, quotes from primary sources, and summaries of the major scholarly positions. Woolf draws together rather complex lines of inquiry from numerous fields (including ecological and socio-political disciplines) and pieces together a narrative that educates, and points the reader to new theoretical directions that can be used to further illuminate the study of the topic at hand. ... Woolf has produced a useful review of the positions on Roman imperialism, a tour-de-force summary of the evolution of Rome from city-state to center of imperial power, and a really good read." --*New England Classical Journal*

"In this passionately told exploration of the history of Rome, Woolf peers closely at what enabled Rome to resist defeats and capitalize on victories, and how it evolved to face new needs and new threats. With dazzling detail, Woolf retells the long story from Rome's birth in 753 B.C.E. to the republic, the empire, and the empire's fall" --*Publishers Weekly*

"Excellent...Understanding the history of Rome is not a simple task...for those already with such an interest, Woolf's book will be a joy to read. For those not yet intrigued by Rome, it may well set them on that path." -
-Adrian Goldsworthy, *The National Interest*

"Exceptionally interesting and provocative reading." --Jonathan Yardley, *Washington Post*

"Could [this] be the best single-volume introduction to the history of ancient Rome? It is conceptual yet avoids the pitfalls of overgeneralizing, a difficult balance to strike. It also has a superb (useful rather than exhaustive) bibliography. A good measure of books such as this is whether they induce you to read or order other books on the same topic and this one did. A sure thing to make my 'Best Books of 2012' list." --Tyler Cowen, *Marginal Revolution*

"This is a marvellous book. Woolf provides a sweeping history of Rome's rise and fall, and asks the big questions of why and how this happened. Better yet, he offers no simple or simplistic answers, but instead well considered discussion of the evidence and how we try to understand it." --Adrian Goldsworthy, author of *How Rome Fell: Death of a Superpower* and *Caesar: Life of a Colossus*

"Explanations for how Rome came to bestride the Mediterranean world puzzled ancient no less than modern historians, and Woolf's attention to enduring preoccupations, as with the fall of the republic and its succession by the emperors, endows his treatment with debate-like liveliness...a fine foundation for further learning about the Roman Empire." --*Booklist*

"How a single-volume history of Rome could contain so much is beyond me. Ranging across time and space, and examining every facet of Roman civilization, it also places Rome's empire in the context of empires elsewhere, from China to Peru. Woolf has written what will surely establish itself as the definitive introduction to his subject." --Tom Holland, author of *Rubicon: The Triumph and Tragedy of the Roman Republic* and *Persian Fire: The First World Empire and the Battle for the West*

Rome: An Empire's Story is a terrific piece of work. It covers a vast chronological sweep briskly, from a wide and revealing variety of perspectives, and with a dazzling intellectual verve. The reader repeatedly encounters shrewd and often unexpected insights all along the way. Greg Woolf has given us a real tour de force of a book." --Nathan Rosenstein, Professor of History at The Ohio State University and author of *Rome and the Mediterranean, 290 to 146 BC*

"How the Roman elite shaped an identity for itself and its many subjects is one theme of Greg Woolf's *Rome: An Empire's Story*, a remarkable work of synthesis that describes the rise, flourishing and decline of the Roman Empire...textbooks divide Roman history into the republican and imperial periods and fix the beginning of the empire proper to the age of Augustus. Not the least merit of Mr. Woolf's chronicle is its depiction of how misleading this division can be..." --*Wall Street Journal*

"Fifteen years ago, Greg Woolf published one of the best books ever written on the western Roman Empire (*Becoming Roman*). His new account of Rome's imperial history is hence something of an event....[a] grand new vision of the Roman empire." --*Times Literary Supplement*

About the Author

Greg Woolf is Professor of Ancient History at the University of St Andrews. He is the author of *Et Tu, Brute?: A Short History of Political Murder* and editor of *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Roman World*.

Users Review

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