which literature and religion interact to create meaning.

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This book is the translation of the second edition of a work published in 1994 by the Presses Universitaires de France. It forms part of a series of translations undertaken by Blackwell of recently published introductory works by French ancient historians. The translation in this case has been done well and reads very easily. The book is divided into three parts covering respectively the history of Rome from its origins to the end of the Republic, the period of Augustus to the Severans, and the third to fifth centuries AD; each of the authors undertook the editing of a different part. Each part is prefaced by a short chapter outlining the available sources of evidence, and the first chapters of Parts II and III take the form of a review of the state of the empire both as a whole and in its individual constituents. It would therefore be possible for new students who were primarily interested in the early or late Imperial periods of Roman history to read Part II or III in isolation without missing too much in the way of general context. At the end there is an extensive chronological table with separate columns devoted to military events, political and social events and cultural and religious events respectively; a useful glossary of technical terms; a guide to further reading in English organised both by period and by subject category (the only significant
alteration to the French edition); and two indices, one for myth, religion and philosophy, and the other general.

The book not only provides a political and military narrative but also contains extensive discussions of social, religious, cultural and economic developments, although the latter are rather less evident in Part I. In Part II each chapter focuses on a natural grouping of emperors, such as the Julio-Claudians or the Flavians, and moves from an account of the major events and actions of their reigns to a discussion of general developments or themes relevant to the period as a whole. In Part III, however, the chapters are shorter and take either a chronological or a thematic focus. This structure works well in my view, and the result is a well-rounded view of the development of Roman history in almost every sphere of importance.

What marks out this book most strikingly from its predecessors is its manner of presentation. The information tends to be presented in bite-size chunks rather than as continuous narrative. There are numerous sub-headings; much use is made of bullet lists, for example to highlight the individual items of a legislative programme; complicated successions of events are often presented in the form of a list rather than in continuous prose and there are many other tables clarifying subjects such as the structure of the army under Augustus, or of the central administration under Constantine. In addition, there are numerous maps and genealogical tables and a large number of illustrations scattered throughout the text. Although this can sometimes give the text a rather jerky feel, something which I found to be more of a problem in some of the chapters on the Republic, the overall effect is to enhance considerably the ease and clarity with which often complex information can be grasped. In fact, the text resembles a good series of lecture notes much more than a traditional-style textbook. As a result, even students who have used other books as the basis for their studies will undoubtedly find this one of great benefit when they come to revise for exams.
The account presented by this book explicitly acknowledges the results of some recent archaeological discoveries and historical debates. For example, it tries not to overplay the extent of the crisis in the third century AD, and stresses the evidence for a renaissance in the fourth century AD. I found the discussions of imperialism in the late Republic and the development of the imperial cult under Augustus particularly even-handed and useful. The former provides a critical introduction to the views of historians from Polybius to the present day before proposing a development from defensive to offensive forms of imperialism in the course of the second century BC; the latter eschews any attempt to find a single explanation for the origins of the imperial cult and instead highlights very effectively the sheer variety of its manifestations under Augustus. However, a few discredited ideas have still managed to find their way into the book. For example, Egypt, for all the differences in its administrative arrangements from other provinces in the early Imperial period, was not the private property of the emperor (220).

The authors lay great stress both in their foreword and in the blurb on the back cover on the emphasis which they have placed on the sources. This is right and proper, since one of the virtues of ancient history, particularly compared to its more recent counterparts, is that it is both possible and often necessary to introduce students to the primary sources right from the beginning. However, in this endeavour they seem to me to have fallen short of complete success. I have mentioned that each part is prefaced by an introduction to the available sources for the period to be covered. Some of these are then referred to or discussed briefly in the main text. However, at many points in the text little impression is given of how the sources contribute to the account being presented. Now, I fully realise that a single volume which attempts to cover the whole of Roman history cannot be expected to discuss the evidence of the sources for each question it touches. Nevertheless, the texture of the narrative has a different feel from that found in the introductory volumes in both the Fontana and the Routledge series on the history of the ancient
world. These manage to integrate the sources into the text more fully and effectively, and thereby give the student a greater sense of what sorts of problems of interpretation are faced by those working at the coal face of ancient history.

Some other criticisms can be made concerning aspects of the book’s presentation. First, there is a rather annoying profusion of quotations from modern authors scattered throughout the text. Most of the time these contribute little to the understanding of the points being made, and it would have been very easy to construe the sentences slightly differently in order to express the same ideas without resort to quotation. This tendency seems particularly inappropriate in an introductory volume. While the name-calling of scholars may be necessary in presenting particularly contentious debates to first-time students, it is surely unjustified in any other context. Moreover, it is particularly inappropriate in this volume since the quotations are almost all taken from the works of French scholars, yet their names are not even mentioned in the bibliography, which restricts itself to works in English.

Second, although the profusion of maps is very welcome, many have been pulled straight out of other books (which are acknowledged) without at the same time borrowing their keys as well. Consequently, there are several maps of the city of Rome, for example, with numbers beside what are clearly major buildings but with no key to identify them. Such maps are consequently of very limited use, and English-speaking students are furthermore unlikely to have access to the original French works from which they have been taken, in order to discover from those sources to what the numbers actually refer.

A rare point at which the lack of a suitable map makes itself felt is in the section on the early history of the Republic. Four maps illustrate through the use of shading the expansion of Rome’s territory and influence across Italy, but there is no detailed map of the topography of Latium or of central Italy. This adds
confusion to what I also regarded as a slightly heavy-going chapter on Rome in the fifth and fourth centuries BC.

Finally, there are several places where particular monuments or objects are discussed in rather more detail than normal but fail to be illustrated. One example is the 'Great Cameo of France' discussed on 244.

To write a one-volume history of Rome is a daunting task and the authors are to be congratulated on producing what is in general an admirably clear and wide-ranging account laid out in an attractive manner. It is certainly the best single volume currently available to accompany a survey course covering the whole or most of Roman history. Even for more specialised courses it is worth recommending, although not as the main textbook, for which volumes in the Routledge series or the Cambridge Ancient History would be more suitable. This is because its clear, easy and often pictorial manner of presentation allows the essential events and issues to be grasped quickly, thereby enhancing the appreciation of the more detailed and conventionally-written works which will deepen understanding. The authors' claim in their foreword to have written a 'volume of initiation' into the history of Rome rather than a conventional textbook has succeeded extremely well.

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