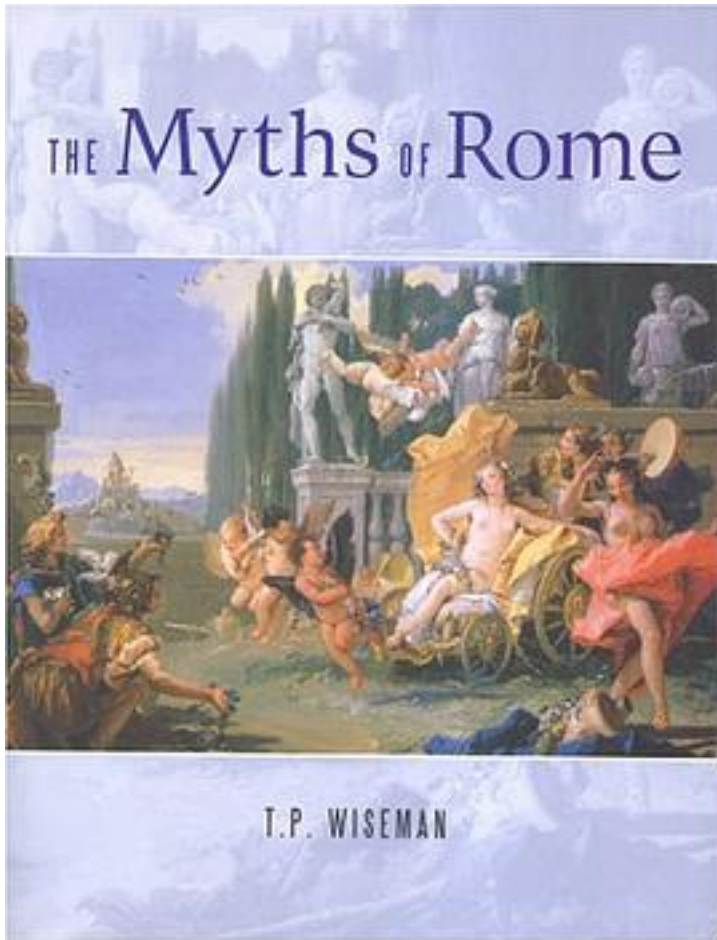


The Myths of Rome



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出版者:David Brown Book Co

出版时间:2004-11

装帧:HRD

isbn:9780859897037

Look at any dictionary of classical mythology, and what you find will be Greek - any mention of the Romans will be by contrast, as of a people who had no gods and heroes of their own, and therefore no true mythology...This is all the result of a

two-hundred-year-old prejudice, born of the Romantic movement and nourished by nineteenth-century classical scholarship, that only the Greeks were authentically creative, and that the Romans were merely practical - engineers, jurists, empire-builders. The purpose of this book is to show that that's all wrong. New discoveries have proved that Rome was not 'at the margin of the civilised world', that it was not merely the 'elite' that created her world of stories. Nor was the foundation legend unique as a Roman myth, and there was certainly no shortage of 'divine tales'. The proof of this is in the great tradition of European painting, from Tiepolo in the eighteenth century back to Botticelli in the fifteenth, artists with no post-Romantic hang-ups about what might or might not count as 'authentic' mythology. Having assembled the neglected evidence for a Roman mythology, Peter Wiseman traces the development of the Roman story-world over time and, through an imaginative effort of reconstruction, transforms our picture of early Roman civilization for ever.

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