



Imperial City: Rome, Romans and Napoleon, 1796-1815

Susan Vandiver Nicassio

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In 1798 the city of Rome was stirred from its slumber by the sudden arrival of the armies of the French Revolution. The Eternal City would never be the same again. The French oversaw the transformation of the city from the capital of the Papal States to a short-lived 'Jacobin' Roman Republic. This experiment was soon swept away and the city emerged from the ensuing years of chaos only to find itself absorbed into Imperial France. The Pope was exiled and Rome was set to be coaxed and bludgeoned into a capital city worthy of a new Empire. Against this historical backdrop Susan Vandiver Nicassio weaves together an absorbing social, cultural and political history of Rome during these two critical decades. Based on primary sources and incorporating two centuries of Italian, French, and international research, she reveals what life was like for the population of Rome in the age of Napoleon. Nicassio guides us through Napoleonic Rome, through its ruins and slums, its palaces and churches. We learn what Romans ate, drank, wore, and read; how they played and prayed (sometimes at the same time); and how they loved and married and died. We see the great festivals, from carnival to the Days of the Dead; the music, the art, dancing, songs and games; the random violence in public houses and intrigue in great houses. We experience life in this city of contradictions: its prisons, orphanages and hospitals the best that Europe could produce, its universities outdated, its economy a chronic disaster, its streets unimaginably filthy, its murder rate staggering and its police force among the worst in the world. Imperial City is a history of a unique city that allows us to observe a city and its people subjected to all the perils of revolution and counter-revolution, occupation and resistance. Susan Vandiver Nicassio is Associate Professor of History at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. She is the author of *Tosca's Rome* and other studies of the culture and politics of the late eighteenth century.

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