Jeroen W. P. Wijnendaele (ed.): Late Roman Italy. Imperium to Regnum. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2023. XV, 504 p., 26 ill., 2 maps, 5 tables. £ 150.00/$ 195.00. ISBN: 978-1-3995-1802-4.

The past two decades have witnessed the proliferation of books on the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy, while studies of the fall of the Roman empire and Justinian's invasion (or 'reconquest') of the peninsula continue to roll off the presses at a steady pace. By contrast, studies of late antique Italy as a subject in its own right remain vanishingly rare. This wide-ranging volume, carefully edited by the prolific Jeroen Wijnendaele, sets out to fill that gap. Divided into sections on "Political Developments" (pp. 13–107), "Institutions" (pp. 109–198), "Society, Economy and Environment" (pp. 199–335), "Religion" (pp. 337–408), and "Culture" (pp. 409–489), it is perhaps a less cohesive book than one might have hoped for, very much a collection of essays rather than a coherent overview of/companion to the Italian peninsula from ca. 250 to ca. 600. That said, all the contributions here are of a quality greater than one has come to expect from collections of this sort. Sadly, the half-hearted index (pp. 495–504) will make it difficult for readers to dip in and extract just the bits of discussion in which one might be specifically interested.

The first essay, Umberto Roberto on "Italy from the Crisis of the Third Century to the Tetrarchy" (pp. 15–34), is a useful overview, though it gives too much credence to the testimony of the *Historia Augusta*. Starting from the fact that Italy and Italians had no collective identity in the early empire, Roberto looks at the way developments in the later third century laid the foundation for an Italian identity to develop in the centuries that followed. Diocletian's effective provincialization of the peninsula is the obvious turning point, rendering the Italian population liable to taxation for the first time since 167 BC. Perhaps as important, though, were the new dioceses, and the new provinces of which they were composed. In Italy, these provinces no longer respected the peninsula's long-standing Augustan *regiones*, which had had some justification in pre-Roman tribal and ethnic terms, and instead created new, ethnically and culturally 'neutral' provinces that ignored such long-standing symbolic boundaries as the River Po. The decentring of Rome as the imperial residence *par excellence* had begun with Gallienus and was exacerbated by Aurelian's troubled relationship with the senatorial aristocracy of the city. The coming provincialization was foreshadowed in the reign of

Probus, with his appointment of two senatorial *correctores Italiae* (the evidence for Aurelian's having anticipated this office is suspect, though accepted here). In effect, the future Annonaria and Suburbicaria were visible in outline a good two decades before Constantine formalized their existence, the one centred on the great military cities of the north Italian plain, the other, south of the Apennines, focused on Rome, to which it was economically subordinate throughout the whole of Late Antiquity. Roberto makes much of the dedicatory inscription to the baths of Diocletian (ILS 646), in which the people of Rome are collectively described as *Romanis suis*, rather than addressed as the senate and people of Rome: this was, he suggests, a deliberate leveling move, one designed to impress upon the Roman populace their newly explicit status as subjects, rather than notional partners in empire.

Noel Lenski's contribution addresses "New Paths to Power: The Bipartite Division of Italy and Its Realignment of Society and Economy in the Fourth Century" (pp. 35–66). He takes as his starting point the provincial list that can be reconstructed from the *Laterculus Veronensis* (ca. 312/314), which is very corrupt but has been plausibly corrected from contemporary evidence by Pierfrancesco Porena. He shows how the Constantinian revision of the tetrarchic diocese of Italiciana into the two *regiones Italiae* was essentially a defensive measure, intended to demilitarize Suburbicaria and forestall the possibility of future revolts based, like the regime of Maxentius, on the great senatorial landowners of Rome. Along with disbanding the praetorian cohorts and the *equites singulares*, Constantine transferred the II Parthica, since the Severan era a strike force stationed at Castra Albana south of the city, to the East. This left behind only the *vigiles* and *urbaniciani*, who were at best paramilitary personnel, not trained soldiers. The new Italy thus became the only diocese with two *vicarii*, and also effectively two prefects, the Italian one resident in Milan and responsible for locking the north Italian plain into the military network of the wider empire, and the *praefectus urbi*, a post of great prestige, looking after the city of Rome and working with the *vicarius* of Suburbicaria to maintain the supply of Rome. More interestingly, Lenski looks at the way the road networks of the two *regiones* influenced their very divergent paths in Late Antiquity, reinforcing the cultural and economic differences that had long existed thanks to the spine of the Apennines. The east-west orientation of the roads of Annonaria increased its integration into the wider empire, while Suburbicaria remained prosperous, but less integrated, looking to the south and to the islands and Africa, rather than to the Rhine-

Danube axis on which fourth-century history tended to turn. This was, as Lenski puts it, a "closed system of subsistence and security" (pp. 56–57) which emperors had little reason to visit or deal with in person. The risks of urban violence were borne by the senatorial aristocracy, whose political reward – as Lenski documents rigorously – was a near monopoly on Italian governorships and a stark overrepresentation in the three elite proconsular governorships in Africa, Asia and Achaea.

Mark Humphries picks up the peninsular story in the Valentinianic period in "Court, Crisis and Response: Italy from Gratian to Valentinian III" (pp. 67–85). His avowed goal is to not merely use Italy as a stage on which other histories take place, but rather to look at it as a subject in its own right. He particularly notes the pattern by which the tensions between Trier, Milan and Rome during the reigns of Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius gave way to an increasing imperial presence in Rome as the fifth century progressed, and this despite Honorius and Valentinian III's frequent residency at Ravenna. He also notes the way the increasing vulnerability of northern Italy and tensions between eastern and western empires went some way towards shifting the dynamic of Annonaria away from the Constantinian east-west integration and towards a north-south Italian connection between the two sides of the Apennines. Finally, editor Jeroen Wijnendaele brings the book's Politics section to a close with "The Final Western Emperors, Odoacer and Late Roman Italy's Resilience" (pp. 86–107). It quite reasonably suggests that the accession of Odoacer, itself a precursor to the Gothic *regnum*, was a form of salvation for the peninsula; slightly less convincingly, it argues against the idea that the imperial office haemorrhaged power and authority after the murders of Aëtius and Valentinian III. Wijnendaele does an excellent job of pulling Majorian out from under the shadow of Ricimer, though one remains very conscious of that emperor's rapid failure to balance all his many competitors in an era when the imperial office had definitively lost a monopoly on violence.

The second section of the book, on "Institutions", begins with Daniëlle Slootjes' "Administering Late Roman Italy: Geographical Changes and the Appearance of Governors" (pp. 111–129). While there is inevitable overlap here with the earlier chapters by Roberto and Lenski, Slootjes focuses more specifically on how Romans perceived boundaries and what they meant in terms of interaction among citizens and between citizens and government. Italy, she suggests, was more deeply affected by the Tetrarchic reorganiza-

tion because it transformed the way the peninsula's inhabitants interacted with the imperial system – previously, senatorial landowners had been the primary interlocutors between the cities of the old Augustan *regiones* and the emperor, a role that was now taken over by governors. In keeping with the European rather than Anglophone consensus, Slootjes views the provincial reorganization of the peninsula as a separate and non-contemporaneous process than the creation of the dioceses, but the new fragment of Diocletian's currency edict from Aphrodisias (published by Angelos Chaniotis and Takashi Fujii in 2015),[1] the existence of which Slootjes notes, really does confirm the simultaneity of these reforms. The meat of the article, however, is an examination of governors' activities and the manner in which local communities honoured former governors as their terms ended. Though evidence exists for only a handful of the more than 800 governors who probably served in the peninsula over the course of the fourth century, all of it seems to confirm Slootjes' main contention, that the new provincial landscape of Italy generated considerably greater supervision of cities and their *curiae*, but also made contacts with the imperial government much less haphazard and less dependent on links of patronage to senatorial landowners resident in Rome.

The reverse of the medal to Slootjes' piece is Stuart McCunn's "How the West Was Run: Local Government in Late Roman Italy" (pp. 130–152). Punning title aside, the article takes as granular approach as is possible given the limitations of our evidence. He addresses the long-standing question of how the city-based structures of local governance in Roman Italy gave way to the rural loci of medieval governance. Rather than adopting the old trope of Tetrarchic reforms (sometimes coded as 'despotism') triggering an ultimately ruinous decline in the status and capabilities of *curiales*, McCunn argues that changes in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, which is to say under Odoacer and the Gothic *regnum*, were just as important for future developments. He has important things to say about the way Constantinian legislation on the heritability of curial status, which in part merely codified existing trends, also produced a definable class of *curiales* for the first time. While this meant that curial service had become a *munus*, obligatory service for those born into the class, it also excluded those from outside the class from seeking magistracies, thus formalizing local oligarchies that had long existed. McCunn also turns on its head evidence often used to show curial

1 A. Chaniotis/T. Fujii: A New Fragment of Diocletian's Currency Regulation from Aphrodisias. In: JRS 105, 2015, pp. 227–233.

decline: the bankruptcy of the Beneventan *curiales* was a direct result of their having had the funds necessary to repair the city after a devastating earthquake – it was doing so that bankrupted them. In terms of the imperial officials directly implicated in municipal life, he offers good discussions of *curatores*, *exactores*, and *defensores*, while he also examines the way eligibility for the first two offices entrenched the predominance of the so-called *principales* over other members of the *curia*. (*Defensores* were at the start explicitly not to be drawn from the class of *curiales*, though that had fallen by the wayside before the end of the fourth century.) McCunn traces the growth of rival power centres to the *curiales*: the *possessores*, who were by the fifth century clearly powerful property owners but did not share the burdens of curial service, and of course bishops. These latter two groups would ultimately be the inheritors of curial powers and authority after the *curiae* themselves had disappeared.

Philip Rance's take on "Armed Forces in Late Roman Italy" (pp. 153–198) is more pessimistic, and perhaps more realistic, than Wijnendaele's in his narrative chapter. The defence of Italy had always relied on stopping invaders either beyond the Alps or, especially after the reigns of Gallienus and Aurelian, in the north Italian plain. Italy south of the Po had been lightly garrisoned even after Severus installed the II Parthica at Castra Albana, and was then effectively demilitarized during the reign of Constantine. This meant – as Constantine's victories over the Maxentians and Alaric's successes after the death of Stilicho showed – that hostile armies had the run of the peninsula if they were not stopped along the line of northern cities that ran roughly via Turin, Milan and Pavia, to Verona and on to Aquileia, across the Julian Alps to Ljubljana, and then southwards to cordon off Istria from the Adriatic coast and Croatian interior. The history of civil war and invasion is well-known and oft-told, the source base has not grown in the same way inscriptions have revealed new governors and prefects, which means that Michaël Vannesse's "La défense de l'Occident romain pendant l'Antiquité tardive"[2] anticipates much of Rance's argument here. Nonetheless, this is a solid survey, good on the "differential visibility" (p. 158) of military men in the sources, and reasonable on the eternal question of the 'barbarization' of the late Roman army. Rance's treatment of the army as depicted in the *Notitia*

2 M. Vannesse: La defense de l'Occident romain pendant l'Antiquité tardive. Recherches géostratégiques sur l'Italie de 284 à 410 ap. J.-C. Brussels 2010 (Collection Latomus 326).

Dignitatum is comprehensive and he is suitably cautious about its reality, given that we can discern nothing resembling it in our records of contemporary events: "If there was a large, regular army in Italy in the 420s–30s, it was remarkably inert or apolitical" (p. 173) is the way he puts it, though it would perhaps be better to conclude that what the *Notitia* describes for us is a fantasy. Certainly, as Rance correctly states, it becomes impossible to document 'regular' units of the field army (*comitatenses*) in the peninsula after the 440s at the latest, which is true irrespective of the weight one gives to questions of barbarization.

The book's next section, on "Society, Economy and Environment", is less coherent than were the previous two. Ulriika Vihervalli and Victoria Leonard's "Elite Women and Gender-Based Violence in Late Roman Italy" (pp. 201–222) is very short but genuinely groundbreaking in the way it focalizes the period's high politics, in both church and state, through the violence inflicted upon elite women. The article examines various forms of gender-based violence, from the pressures of procreation and marriage accompanied by threat of harm; pregnancy and violence; abduction, captivity and rape; and finally the murder or assassination of women and their relatives. The section on Maria and Thermantia, the daughters of Stilicho and Serena married to Honorius each in their turn, is particularly effective as a window into the article's main concerns, as too are discussions of Galla Placidia and Eudocia: the authors are quite right that their skill and long, successful engagement in imperial politics are too often used to romanticize, obfuscate, or play down the basic fact that both were abducted and forced into marriages as young women. While the article is perhaps less closely focused on Roman Italy than most others in the book, it should be required reading for anyone writing on the politics of the period.

Niels P. Arends' "Land of the Free? Considering Smallholders and Economic Agency in Late Antique Italy" (pp. 223–286) is, at sixty-five pages, much the longest contribution to the volume. While it is likely to be hard going for those not particularly interested in economic history, it is very comprehensive, revealing just how extensive our source base actually is, and usefully redirects attention from the traditional focus on landholding on the grand scale of the *latifundia* to that of smallholders of different sorts. It demonstrates the way smallholders could exist alongside large estates and also the fact that the simple binary relationship of oppressed smallholders and oppressive landowning elites is far from justified by the evidence. By

smallholder Arends means "free rural cultivators who practise intensive, permanent agriculture on relatively small farms, whereby the most important social and economic unit is the family household, capable of organising labour, exploiting resources and guiding consumption" (p. 225). That is a capacious but certainly workable definition. Arends argues for the need to refine or replace the consensus economic analysis, which sees the state-subsidised *annona* as so much the driving force of the late Roman economy that the end of the *annona* essentially brings all but the most local trade to an end: there is ample evidence for landholders, small and large, continuing to be able to sell and buy on the open market even after the Vandal conquest of Africa had broken the *annona* and with it what Chris Wickham called the "tax-spine" of the empire. Arends offers contributions to many other interpretative controversies that occupy economic historians, but those more interested in *Realien* might happily begin with the pair of regional studies, on Liguria and Southern Italy, that close the article and then circle back to the more technical and theoretical early sections.

Far shorter is Edward M. Schoolman's "The Human Landscape and Palaeoecology of Late Roman Italy" (pp. 287–303). He takes a consilience-driven approach (meaning an attempt at meaningfully balancing archaeological, historical, and natural science evidence) to three regional studies – the Po valley, the Rieti basin, and Sicily – in order to show that there is no one interpretative model that can be applied across the whole peninsula. Pollen samples allow him to use plant evidence as a proxy for the type of vegetation that existed in the different landscapes and this shows that the relationship of humans to the landscape, and changes over time, differed radically in each of these places and cannot be fitted into any sort of model of overall decline or landscape degradation. Neil Christie's "Cities and Urban Life in Roman Italy: Transformations of the Old, Impositions of the New" (pp. 304–335) covers familiar ground for its author. Roman Italy was a land of hundreds of cities, most of which survived Late Antiquity in one form or another, though frequently transformed out of all recognition. Christie looks at changes to the built urban fabric, including the temples, fora and administrative buildings, as well as *spectacula* and various types of housing. He goes on to look at the way the church made its way into cities, earlier in Italy than in other parts of the western empire, and usefully underscores the way church building and the provision of church furnishings were an important economic driver throughout the period. There are also somewhat perfunc-

tory sections on city walls and defences and on the various cities damaged by seismic events or flooding and alluviation. That said, the extensive and very up-to-date bibliography is extremely useful and points the reader to a great many out-of-the way Italian publications that would otherwise be difficult of access.

There are three contributions to the section on "Religion", beginning with Bronwen Neil's "From Local Authority to Episcopal Power: The Changing Roles of Roman and Italian Bishops" (pp. 339–355). The article traces the consolidation of episcopal power in several phases: pre-Constantinian; 312 to Leo of Rome and the council of Chalcedon in 451; and 452–490. Neil is perhaps too inclined to see pre-Constantinian Christians as a "barely tolerated minority" (p. 340), when it is clear that emperors like Gallienus understood churches to have legal and property rights. Likewise, the historicity of several third-century martyrdoms of Roman bishops is very much open to question. With the accession of Constantine, however, Neil's arguments become authoritative and convincing. Despite rival episcopal authorities, in Milan and Aquileia especially, Roman bishops were aggressive in their issuing of decretals in the fourth and earlier fifth centuries, and the general applicability of some of their judgements is witnessed by their incorporation into the earliest canon law collections: Siricius of Rome's decree on clerical celibacy has remained in force in the Roman Catholic church ever since. There are good summaries of recent research on the episcopal role in the development of the liturgy; on the promotion of saints' cults; and on episcopal interventions in civic as well as ecclesiastical leadership. If the period from Constantine to 451 was one of the steadily advancing power of the bishop of Rome, the post-Chalcedon years witnessed diminishing returns, which Neil attributes to the lack of interest in church affairs on the part of the last, ephemeral western emperors, and then to the dominance of Arian kings under Goths and Lombards. Thus, while the foundations of future papal power might have been laid by wide acceptance of the decretals of Leo I and his immediate predecessors, that power would have to be re-won during the central Middle Ages after centuries in abeyance.

Samuel Cohen's "Violence and Episcopal Elections in Late Antique Rome, AD 300–500" (pp. 356–383) covers fairly familiar ground: the contested elections of Damasus in 366 or Symmachus in 498 are justly famous. Cohen's survey is, however, exhaustive, and valuable in arguing more or less convincingly that the violence in papal elections was not spontaneous, face-

less rioting, but rather carefully orchestrated from above to maximize rival candidates' chances of success. Jessica van 't Westeinde takes up less widely studied questions of "Religious Minorities in Late Roman Italy: Jewish City-Dwellers and their Non-Jewish Neighbours" (pp. 384–408). She takes the evidence from Annonaria and Suburbicaria separately, not least because it is much more plentiful for the latter than the former; she also excludes the city of Rome itself from the study. Throughout, her main concern is to situate the different socio-religious groups within their urban context, rather than adopting the more usual, and generalising, high altitude viewpoint. For Milan, Aquileia, and Ravenna, this means surveying the whole of the exiguous evidence, which van 't Westeinde pares back from some of the more expansive claims of earlier scholars: several inscriptions that have been taken to be Jewish are not, she suggests, and there are no archaeological remains of synagogues. The evidence of imperial legislation would seem to argue against Christian triumphalist narratives, but again, there is not enough available to be sure. There is more evidence for the south, and van 't Westeinde concentrates on Venosa, where it is particularly rich, and the Italian islands. Her conclusion is that Christian-Jewish boundaries were more porous in Suburbicaria than is often believed and that the relative weakness of southern bishops by comparison to those of the north may well have made any efforts at suppressing Judaism there less successful.

The final section, on "Culture", is again a bit of a grab-bag. Miriam A. Hay's "Christian Sarcophagi in Late Roman Italy: Culture and Connection" (pp. 411–453) is the second-longest contribution to the volume and extensively illustrated. This is effectively a survey of fourth-century examples, divided into three categories: sarcophagi exported from Rome, as determined using the stylistic criteria laid out by Guntram Koch; locally-made sarcophagi; and so-called "'city-gate' type" (p. 413) sarcophagi, which are restricted to northern Italy. Two or three examples of each type are examined in detail, but the article suffers from its images, which are not reproduced well-enough to allow the reader to fully absorb the iconographic arguments made by the author. Adrastos Omissi's "Late Roman Italy in Latin Panegyric: From the *Panegyrici Latini* to Ennodius" (pp. 454–474) does exactly what its title suggests, picking out every reference to Italia in the thirty or so speeches that survey from the period in question (the Gallic *Panegyrici* collection, Symmachus, Ausonius, Claudian, Merobaudes, Sidonius, and Ennodius). There are no more than thirty references across those thirty speeches, so this exercise

in typologizing is exemplary without being terribly fruitful. That Italy south of the Po is never mentioned, apart from the city of Rome itself, merely confirms what one would expect, given the far greater engagement of the north with the empire as a whole. Overall, though, Omissi is entirely correct when he states that his "survey of the panegyrics has led us to largely negative conclusions about the place of Italy within the imaginative landscape of Roman political oratory" (p. 471). Peter Van Nuffelen's concluding, short contribution is called "Stepping Out of the Shadows: Italy in Late Antique Historiography" (pp. 475–489). Van Nuffelen's command of the surviving historical material from this period is comprehensive and he devotes himself to examining how Italy is given a voice in the historical works of Late Antiquity as opposed to its general subordination to the city of Rome in earlier accounts. (Some of these observations, one should note, will be familiar to readers of Van Nuffelen's study of Orosius.)[3] There are also useful insights into the way Italy takes shape as a synonym for the western empire in the Greek sources of the late fifth and especially the sixth century.

Wijnendaele's well-conceived book is more coherent than many such volumes, and also authentically and admirably focused on the Italian peninsula. There is much of value here. Various pieces will appeal more to various readers than will others, but there is something for almost anyone in every contribution. The pieces by Vihervalli and Leonard, van 't Westeinde, and Arends in particular should be attended to even by readers who might not see their immediate relevance to their own work.

3 P. Van Nuffelen: Orosius and the Rhetoric of History. Oxford 2012 (Oxford Early Christian Studies).

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