Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani (ed.): Roma altomedievale. Paesaggio urbano, società e cultura (secoli V–X). Roma: Carocci editore 2023 (Frecce 370). 322 pp., 67 ill. € 29.00. ISBN: 978-88-290-1831-4.

Inside St. Peter's basilica at the Vatican, on 6 April 544, there occurred the celebration of the seventh anniversary of the election of pope Vigilius (537–555), which had (apparently) been postponed by a week on account of the date of Easter that year. An unusual scene unfolded that has gone virtually unnoticed by modern historical writers, but which is of immense relevance to those interested in the urban landscape, society, and culture of late antique and early medieval Rome: the subdeacon Arator, who was a former minister to the Ostrogothic kings Theoderic and Athalaric, made a public presentation to pope Vigilius of the two-book poem that he had composed in transposing the *Acts of the Apostles* to Latin verse. As luck would have it, an account of this presentation and the subsequent reception accorded to the work by contemporaries survives thanks to the practice of adding colophons to Graeco-Roman texts. The note composed by an anonymous scribe reads (CUF edition by Bureau/Deproost 2017[1]: pp. 185–186, my translation of their Latin text; the older, defective version of CSEL 72, p. XXVIII, is translated, with significant omissions and errors, by Llewellyn 1971: pp. 75–76):

> In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, thanks to the assistance of the blessed lord Peter, a *codex* of this sort was offered by Arator – *vir illustris*, former *comes domesticorum*, former *comes rerum privatarum*, a consecrated individual and a subdeacon of the Apostolic Church of the holy see of Rome – to the holy and apostolic pope Vigilius and received by him on the eighth day before the Ides of April in the presbytery before the confession of the blessed lord Peter, when numerous bishops, presbyters, deacons, and a large part of the clergy were gathered in that same place. After the pope had a portion of it read out loud right there, he gave it to Surgentius, the venerable *primicerius* of the School of Notaries so that it might be placed in the archive of the Church. All of the learned men of letters immediately asked his Blessedness to order that it be recited in public. After he had ordered that this be done in the church of the blessed Peter which is named *Ad Vincula*, a large crowd of both religious and lay nobility and of all classes of people assembled there. So, with that same subdeacon Arator reciting, on different days both books were heard in four sessions, since only half of a book could be read in a single day on account of the

1 For abbreviated references to authors and works, see the Bibliography at the end of this review (pp. 420–421).

> constant repetitions which people demanded with frequent applause. The recitals were performed on these days: the first on the Ides of April, the second on the fifteenth day before the Kalends of May, the third on the eighth day before the Ides of May, and the fourth on the third day before the Kalends of June. This took place in the third year after the consulate of the *vir clarissimus* Basilius, which was the seventh year of the Indiction.

Whatever the precise filiation uniting this event of Late Antiquity to the recitation that P. Vergilius Maro is said to have offered of the *Georgics* for the Imperator Caesar returning victorious from Alexandria in 29 BC (or those of C. Asinius Pollio [*cos.* 40 BC]), the event is striking as the last known instance of a classical recitation in the imperial capital. The episode is not mentioned anywhere in the stimulating volume edited by Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani that is under review here, but it unquestionably encapsulates many of the themes and issues that this collective work of historical reconstruction deals with as archaeologists, art historians, palaeographers, epigraphers, and historians use our newly acquired knowledge of the material culture of late antique Rome in order to rewrite the city's history. Who were the protagonists? Where and how did their actions take place? What were the material manifestations of their culture and the socio-economic consequences of their production? What, in short, did the movement and presence of people and goods on the landscape mean in terms of the lived experience of the Eternal City?

* * *

With the first chapter[2] ("La storia", pp. 11–26), Giulia Facchin and Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani situate the present volume within the modern literature dedicated to the topic of Rome during the period CE 400–1000 (pp. 11–18), and they offer a swift review of *l'histoire événementielle* that constitutes the backdrop for this book (pp. 18–26). The review of the modern literature is described as dealing with "un tema storiografico" (p. 11), but it goes far beyond what might be described as pure 'historiography'. The works considered include not only those of narrative historians such as Felix Papencordt, Alfred von Reumont, and Ferdinand Gregorovius, but also those of archaeologists, art historians, and socio-economic historians such as

2 For a detailed table of contents including the subheadings, readers are referred to the end of this review (pp. 422–423).

Richard Krautheimer, Chris Wickham, and Hendrik Dey. This change in what it means to write about 'historiography' reflects the 'material turn' that historical research has taken over the last century. No small part in this change in approach is due to the work of Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani, Roberto Meneghini, Paolo Delogu, and the many other Italian colleagues who, engaged in the excavation and study of the *Crypta Balbi* and the imperial *Fora* (esp. Forum Iulium and Forum Transitorium), have thereby revolutionised our understanding of the transition at Rome from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Their work has performed for medieval Rome the equivalent of the excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum for ancient Rome, and Facchin appropriately contributes a two-page insert describing this work (pp. 16–17). Complementing this contextualisation of scholarship is an eight-page synthesis of the events and figures of note in the history of Rome during the fifth to tenth centuries. Starting with the figure of Theodosius I (379–395), it culminates with the figure of Otto III (976–1002). The Germanic sacks of Rome in the fifth century, the Gothic War of the sixth, plagues and floods, the Lombard menace, Carolingian interventions, and the affirmation of the dynasty of Alberic all find mention.

In Chapter 2 ("Il paesaggio urbano", pp. 27–85), Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani revisits the theme of "abitato" vs. "disabitato" so memorably discussed by Krautheimer in his classic monograph on the city of medieval Rome, offering caution as regards the temptation to imagine a static past, where things more or less remained unaltered as of the fourth-fifth centuries. The immediate area of Porta Maggiore, for instance, is on record as having a substantial population in the tenth century, as opposed to its subsequent abandonment, and sites such as the residence beneath the Piazza dei Cinquecento in front of the Stazione Termini reveal retrenchment rather than complete abandonment. This latter example shows clearly how the material culture of the elite was reduced in terms of quantity and quality (pp. 32–34). On the other hand, *casae seu tuguria* are known from the documentary evidence (Cod. Theod. 14.14), supplementing the overall lack of remains for the less fortunate members of society. Moreover, thanks to the careful excavation of sites such as the imperial *Fora*, we now have relatively plentiful evidence for the layout *domus solaratae*, i. e. houses having more than one storey (p. 40–44). Naturally, residences were only one element in the constitution of the urban landscape, and public monuments and churches figured equally large in the lived experience of the city. Defensive walls, aqueducts,

and roads all provided essential services for daily life and guaranteed the enduring existence of a sizable urban agglomerate. The restoration of the *Aqua Traiana*, for instance, allowed for the continued operation of grain mills situated on the Janiculum (pp. 57, 59). As for churches, exemplary is the lost example of S. Lucia del Calcarario (p. 69 and fig. 14). Appropriately enough, this survey concludes with a review of the evidence for building techniques as revealed by the surviving traces of the structures, whether foundation blocks for the apse of S. Lucia del Calcarario (fig. 19) or the blocks re-used in the wall of the *domus* of the Forum of Nerva (fig. 20).

In the third chapter ("Le strutture del potere", pp. 87–106), Andrea Antonio Verardi examines the ruling elite and the civic institutions through which Rome was administered between the fifth and the tenth century. The route leading from the Senate of the late antique capital to the nobility of a papal city was neither straightforward nor gradual and predictable: moments of *caesura* such as the Greek-Gothic War (AD 535–554) and the fall of the dynasty of Theophylact (mid-tenth century) are appropriately pointed out. Discussion is structured by Verardi in two parts, with one focussing on the hegemonic classes in the fifth to seventh centuries and the other dealing with those classes in the seventh to tenth centuries. The substitution of the Roman emperor by the bishop of Rome as the arbiter of local power (p. 103) is underscored by the observation that the disappearance of the senatorial class of late antique Rome was followed by the emergence there of a papal aristocracy consisting of ecclesiastical and lay/military dignitaries. The *déclassement* of Rome as an imperial capital in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries meant in practical terms that the vast majority of the senatorial order had abandoned the city for Constantinople by the middle of the sixth century. Only some nine families, it is reckoned (p. 90), remained in Rome by the time of Gregory the Great. The new focus on the *patriarchium* at the Lateran where the bishop of Rome resided translated into ever-increasing sophistication in the hierarchies (ecclesiastical and lay) responsible for the daily government and defense of the city of Rome. Figures such as the *superista*, the 'palatine' *iudices*, and the *nomenclator* figure among the new officials introduced as the pope assumed independence from the Byzantine emperor in the eighth century. As a result, the structures of power of the late eighth century were visibly different from those of the early fifth.

In the fourth chapter ("La cultura scritta", pp. 107–123), Serena Ammirati offers a synoptic vision of writing and literacy in the city of Rome be-

tween the fifth and tenth centuries, linking this local history to developments in northern Europe and across the Mediterranean. The focus is on books, documents, and inscriptions composed in Latin, as this was the principal language of the Roman church and civic culture, but Greek does receive some consideration in view of the presence of Greek monasteries and a vigorous, minority Hellenophone community active in Rome until the early ninth century. Bookending the coverage of book production in this period are, on the one hand, the most ancient parchment codices containing the complete works of Vergil (e.g. BML, Laur. 39.1, containing a subscription by the *consul* Turcius Rufius Apronianus Asterius dating work to the morrow of the celebration of the *Palilia* on 21 April AD 494) and the *Atlantic* ('extra-large') copies of the Bible containing the recension by Peter Damian (dating to the eleventh century). The evolution in styles of Uncial (p. 109, fig. 22), Semi-uncial (p. 111, fig. 23), and Carolingian (p. 113, fig. 24) is discussed and illustrated in some detail. The difference between scripts for books and those employed in documents (viz. new cursive) is duly noted (p. 116), as is the continued use of papyrus by the papal chancellery until the mid-eleventh century (p. 118). The transposition of documents from papyrus (or parchment) to stone so as to render them imperishable and publicly visible as *chartae lapidariae* (e.g. the copy of a donation made by Flavia Xanthippe, which was recopied under Gregory IV) is likewise remarked (p. 118). The evolution from Square capitals ("la capitale epigrafica", p. 119) to Rustic capitals ("la capitale rustica", ibid.) and Filocalan script ("la capitale damasiana", ibid.), with a progressive decadence followed in the ninth century by a recovery of square capitals, is also observed. As so often, evocation of the past resulted in renewal.

With the fifth chapter ("Economia, produzione e commerci", pp. 125–142), Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani reviews the variegated, disparate evidence for the economic life of Rome in the fifth to tenth centuries, teasing out meaning from what is often extremely exiguous material. Santangeli Valenzani has divided this chapter into two parts, with the first focussing on workshops and the production of finished goods (e.g. metalworking, ceramics) and the second examining agriculture and the production of foodstuffs (e.g. cultivated plots of land within the Aurelian Wall, water-mills). Naturally, the findings of excavations conducted in the *Crypta Balbi*, the *Athenaeum* (at Piazza Venezia), and the *Forum Iulium* (Foro di Cesare) are extensively cited, as they cast much-needed light on industries producing finished items in

metal, bone, glass, stone, leather, and fabric (p. 128, a listing for the *Crypta Balbi*). The question of whether these deposits reflect the nature of the place where they were found or the overall economic life of late antique Rome is ever present, as is the question of what they tell us about Rome's connection to economic life in other parts of the late antique Mediterranean and northern Europe. The eighth century emerges as a clear watershed in the economic life of late antique Rome: importations from Africa and the East cease and autarky appears in the form of things such as the "Forum Ware", locally produced glazed ceramics. If items such as vases and coins – in addition to industrial waste – allow for a clearer and more modulated vision of the city's productive life and the drastic economic contraction that took place in the "Carolingian period" (p. 133), written documents and palaeobotanical evidence reveal the pursuit of agriculture within the city of Rome, as within many another late antique city of Italy (p. 136, aptly citing Goodson 2021). Perhaps most surprising (and telling) is the interim finding that a vineyard-cum-orchard of ca. 1000 m^2 was cultivated in the *Forum Iulium* (Foro di Cesare).

With the sixth chapter ("Arte dell'altomedioevo romano", pp. 143-204), Antonella Ballardini and Giulia Bordi offer a review of the artwork realised at Rome between the fifth and the tenth century. Wide-ranging and detailed, this overview is divided into four sections that comprehensively cover the different artistic mediums of fresco, mosaic, and architectural sculpture. Citing the synodal letter addressed by pope Hadrian I to the empress Irene and her son Constantine VI on the eve of the Council of Nicaea II, they highlight the two fundamental categories of image observed by Christians at that time: narrative representation (*historia*), with a view to perpetuating memory, and sacred presence (*imago*), serving for veneration. The evolution of visual language for the purpose of decorating different parts of the basilica is illustrated through attention to the images appearing in the apse, in the nave, on the triumphal arch, and on apsidal walls. No less significant is the conscious abandonment of the Graeco-Roman tradition of sculpture in the round, with the artistic tradition henceforth limited to the narrow confines of architectural sculpture with its vegetal motifs, stylised animals, and geometric forms. Nothing is more eloquent than the juxtaposition of the plasticity displayed by the seething mass of humanity in the battle scene with which the Portonaccio sarcophagus is adorned (p. 172, fig. 42) and the hieratic quality of a slab that may once have adorned the high

altar of S. Maria in Cosmedin (p. 191, fig. 49), which presents an Eden-like tableau with peacocks seated on a cross (filled with a meander motif) as they drink from *kantharoi*. The 'spiritual' aesthetic of Late Antiquity is another world, compared to the realism of Classical Greece and Rome. Reflections on the methods and workshops that produced this new artwork nicely conclude what is an accessible presentation of a mass of material.

In the seventh chapter ("Vivere e morire a Roma", pp. 205–229), Roberto Meneghini and Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani provide an overview of the population of Rome during the fifth to tenth centuries. They do so through three sections that focus respectively on statistics, foreigners, and burial sites. The census held in 1526 plausibly offers potential insight into the city's evolution between Alaric's sack of Rome in 410 and that suffered under Charles V in 1527. But much is admittedly guess-work. The thesis that the effect of the Antonine plague was enduring has a certain plausibility, and the figure of 50–60,000 is credible if one opts for a static model (p. 208). But statistics such as the 3,000 nuns long resident in Rome, according to a passage in a letter of Gregory the Great (epist. 7.23; cited at p. 207), are vulnerable to critical review and too labile to offer a firm basis for demographic reconstruction. Intriguingly, nutritional study of skeletal remains has of late provided insight into the grim reality of daily life in Rome in this period (Varano et al. 2020). Foreigners, it may be assumed, comprised a sizable percentage of the population of Rome, to a far greater degree than was the case in other mainland cities. Although in a certain sense a continuation of the city's political significance in Antiquity, this fact reflected Rome's significance as a religious centre thanks to the remains of Sts. Peter and Paul and the presence of the pope as the successor to St. Peter. Pilgrims flocked to the city to venerate the remains of the saints, staying in *xenodochia* or other hospitable structures, and ecclesiastics, soldiers, and other groups of foreign extraction stably took up residence in structures such as monasteries or *scholae peregrinorum*. Burials within the circuit of the Aurelian Wall reflect this changing composition as well as the new, sporadic patterns of settlement (p. 225: "macchia di leopardo", or "leopard spots").

With the eighth and final chapter ("La città e il territorio", pp. 231–268), Lucrezia Spera and Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani direct readers' attention to the hinterland of the city of Rome, focussing in particular on the area to be found between the Aurelian Wall and the ninth milestone. Discussing the evolution of Rome's hinterland between the fifth and the

tenth century, they offer a detailed vision of the different types of use to which it was put and the various structures that were accordingly to be found there. From the documentary record, structures such as *fundi*, *massae*, *vineae*, *loci*, *curtes*, *casae*, *casalia*, and *castra* are known to have dotted the late antique and early medieval landscape. On the other hand, that a specific form of architecture was correlated with a specific property type does not necessarily follow from this modulated vocabulary of property and production. The fact that *casale* was employed to designate a property that might or might not have residential structure(s) of some sort (p. 266) is a clear sign that undue inferences from linguistic evidence are to be avoided. The striking and most useful aspect of this chapter is its emphasis on change over time, such as the conversion of suburban *villae* from residential retreats to more practical use for purposes of agricultural production (e. g. Villa of Passolombardo) or the cannibalisation of funeral monuments to obtain building materials (e. g. the mausoleum of M. Nonius Macrinus). With their eye for detail, however, Spera and Santangeli Valenzani also show that change was neither uniform nor necessarily straightforward. So, for instance, readers are alerted to the fact that some underground crypts of the martyrs (e. g. that of S. Cecilia in the catacombs of S. Callisto) show clear signs of late medieval decoration subsequent to *translationes* (p. 259). The resulting image of the hinterland of late antique and early medieval Rome is a densely articulate one that invites further reflection and study.

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There is much to welcome and appreciate in this thoughtful volume. The discussion of the material culture of late antique and early medieval Rome (which has been defined by the editor and contributors as comprising the fifth to tenth century) is vivid, interesting, and useful. Whether this volume is addressed to general readers, university students, or colleagues and peers, it provides an enthralling introduction to – or update on – the debates currently being held with regard to the art, archaeology, and history of Rome after Antiquity: material culture stands to the fore in all of the eight contributions that make up this volume. One of the things that the reviewer found most useful was Santangeli Valenzani's discussion (Chapter 2) of the construction and layout of elite residences (thanks to recent, careful excavation and study), which is accompanied by some reflection on those of the less well-to-do and includes considerations on nothing less than archaeobotany.

In a like vein, Ballardini and Bordi (Chapter 6) offer readers a discussion of the decoration of churches that nicely summarises changing styles, methods, and materials, linking these to changing theologies and changing politics. Problems of current interest to scholars, such as the question of colour, are presented in a manner that leaves room for debate and invites further critical thought. Similarly, Roberto Meneghini (Chapter 7.2) and Lucrezia Spera (Chapter 8.1) in their individual contributions furnish excellent overviews of the evidence for (and debates concerning) intramural burials and the use and appearance of the city's suburban regions. The detailed mapping and statistical analysis of intramural burials, for instance, is superlative. So, too, are things such as the example of mausoleum of M. Nonius Macrinus, which is cited to illustrate the reuse and disappearance of the ancient monuments. The messiness of the evidence is brilliantly evoked and confronted. Lastly, the special inserts that focus on specific subfields or topics (e. g. numismatics, the Tiber) add to the detail encountered in the individual chapter surveys and give readers a deeper understanding of the issues involved. Overall, there is an ambitious attempt at comprehensive coverage that reaches out to the general public (or so it would appear), but also has much to offer to university students and peers.

There are other moments, however, when the treatment of Roman landscape, society, and culture seems regrettably grey or opaque. So, for instance, moments of pomp and circumstance (e. g. the consulate of Fl. Euthericus Cilliga in AD 519, the holding of the synod at St. John in the Lateran in AD 649, and the festivities that followed the coronation of Charles the Bald on Christmas day in AD 975) are passed over in silence. That is most unfortunate, for these moments of communal and state action are the salt of life that abides in contemporaries' memories and what structures their lived experience of history. (The reviewer, for instance, is reminded of what it was like to be present in Rome during the celebrations connected to the winning of the Scudetto by AS Roma in spring 2001.) Whether thoughts turn to the panegyric pronounced by Cassiodorus or the games offered by Eutheric, to the intriguing descriptions of the use of Greek for discussion of theological concerns that seem unremittingly alien to a modern reader today, or to the *Cena Cypriani* that the deacon Johannes Hymmonides wrote in trochaic *septenarii* in connection with the celebration hosted by pope John VIII (MGH PL 4.2.857–900), there is an abundant, vivid body of literature just waiting in the wings to cast light on the three themes highlighted by the subtitle of

Roma altomedievale. Surely, the providing of games in the traditional venues of imperial Rome, the use of Greek for abstruse theological debate, and the employment of classical metre for Latin verse making fun of current foibles are relevant to landscape, society, and culture? Aside from the mirror that literature offers us, moreover, there is that of the more immediate testimony – often almost a snapshot in real time – furnished by inscriptions. So, for example, there are the two slabs today to be seen in the front porch of S. Maria in Cosmedin, which preserve in monumental format a legal document in which the last Byzantine *dux* of Rome (and *dispensator* for the *diaconia* situated at that church), Eustathius, who styled himself *humillimus servulus tuus* in addressing the *praeclara Virgo caelestis Regina sancta superexaltata et gloriosa Domina mea Dei Genetrix Maria*, made provision for "Christ's poor" (*Christi pauperes*). Something (cf. De Rubeis 2001: pp. 119–120) might have been done with this material (cf. pp. 71, 120, 137) so as to render the analyses and narrative of the volume under review more memorable and immediate to readers. Who cares about yet another *dux*? But the last Byzantine *dux* of Rome, now that is quite another matter. No less striking are painted inscriptions, such as those displaying theological texts on the walls of S. Maria Antiqua (cf. De Rubeis 2001: p. 109, fig. 76, for a medley of texts dating the pontificate of John VII; Price 2021: pp. 449–459, for four texts that are plausibly to be reassigned from Martin I to Vitalian). Executed by local craftsmen (or individuals who were arguably long resident in the city), these pieces are windows onto what their patrons considered important and worthy of recording at a given moment in time. Their quality and materials also arguably offer insight into the state of the economy and culture. The fact that only one inscription (p. 121, fig. 25: the *Notitia Martyrum* of S. Prassede) is offered here to readers in a photograph that takes in the whole stone, but presents the letters in 6-pt font (legible to the reviewer only upon taking a photograph and enlarging it), is an unfortunate sign of the times: apparently unable to read the languages, art historians and archaeologists treat the written word as some sort of talisman to be trotted out on special occasions for momentary exhibition to profane eyes (like the host at the eucharist), but not to be cited verbatim, much less to be explained properly. The grey, opaque nature of that photograph captures a fundamental problem with this volume.

Another problem is the quality of academic production. Indices, for instance, are a last chance for identifying and eliminating dreadful mistakes. Paradoxically, this opportunity was not used. So, for instance, pope Vigilius

has been transformed (often, but not invariably) into pope Virgilius: the entry in the index of names (p. 320) has that error, as do two of the three pages (pp. 144 and 211, but not p. 246) listed for that entry. Moreover, in one instance (p. 211), pope Virgil (*sic*) finds himself transported from the sixth to the fourth century, so as to be a contemporary of Constantine and his sons. This is not an isolated instance, as errors involving the general Ricimer and popes Hormisdas, Martin I, and Hadrian I demonstrate. Comparable are things such as the double entry for a piece by Vera von Falkenhausen, which appears twice (pp. 288, 312) because of someone's inability to spell her name properly. As for the "riconversione" of the Pantheon into a church (p. 22) or the claim that the Aurelian Wall that was begun in AD 276 (p. 45), venial sins can be amusing. Less so are those that are quite inexplicable. Santangeli Valenzani twice describes the Iunii Bassi in terms that are grotesquely misleading, terming them an "antica e gloriosa famiglia" (p. 32) and writing of theirs being a "grande famiglia senatoria" (p. 67). The Iunii Bassi were *novi homines* who achieved an exalted position on the landscape of fourth-century Rome thanks to the father's loyal service as a praetorian prefect of Constantine over the course of fourteen years. With the premature death of the son in AD 359 (and his burial in the apse of the new basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican), the family completely disappears from the historical record. In spite of their prominent location near what would become S. Maria Maggiore (and apparently their incorporation in the legend of that church's foundation), they were not as well rooted nor as enduring as the Anicii or the Decii or other *nobiles* of the fourth and fifth centuries. On a par with these misinterpretations and oversights, it is worth adding, is the failure to cite various contributions of relevance, ranging from Umberto Roberto's fine "Roma capta" (2012) to Simon Barnish's incredibly detailed PBSR paper on the late Roman aristocracy of the West (1988) to Joanna Story's extremely relevant and useful publications on the epitaph of pope Hadrian I (2005, 2023). In closing, it may be remarked that little use has – oddly enough – been made of the document known as the *Itinerarium Einsidlense* (for which, see now the perceptive historical interpretation offered by Michael Allen in a publication of 2015).

Notwithstanding these problems, the merits of this handy volume remain considerable, and its publication is most welcome. In general the overviews of the subjects treated are precise, reliable, and thorough. (There still remains too much concern with the figure of Constantine, however, contrary to the

book's avowed temporal focus and confusing the historical individual's documented actions in the early fourth century with the report of later legend.) Moreover, the topic of late antique and early medieval Rome is approached from a variety of perspectives, thereby furnishing readers with complementary visions of the same epoch. On the other hand, the emphasis is clearly revolutionary: there is a focus on material culture that reflects the material turn (*Wende*) in historical studies in the last half-century. The refined product that results from this is an agreeable one that offers the reader unexpected vistas, much like turning a corner in a shabby quarter of town today and suddenly finding oneself looking out at the Piazza Navona.

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Table of Contents