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A. D. Lee, *From Rome to Byzantium AD 363 to 565: The Transformation of Ancient Rome*. Edinburgh History of Ancient Rome. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. Pp. xxii + 337. ISBN 978-0-74-862790-5. £95.

The present reviewer began his first foray into the Late Roman world a decade ago. Students looking for an introduction to the social, cultural, and religious history of the period were then well catered for, thanks to the industrious output of Peter Brown and his Late Antiquity school. Yet if one needed a single comprehensive account of the Late Empire's *histoire événementielle*, one was still best served with John Bury's *Later Roman Empire* (1923) or Ernst Stein's *Histoire du Bas-Empire* (1949). It is only since 2005 that there has been a surge of overviews dealing with the period, the two most prominent ones being the diametrically opposed *Fall of the Roman Empire* by Peter Heather (2005) and *Barbarian Migrations and the Late Roman West* by Guy Halsall (2007). Besides these, there is also Stephen Mitchell's *Later Roman Empire* (2006), Neil Christie's *The Fall of the Western Roman Empire* (2011), and the revised editions of Averil Cameron's *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity* (2012) and John Moorhead's *The Roman Empire Divided* (2012). Now we have A.D. Lee's *From Rome to Byzantium*, the final instalment of the Edinburgh History of Ancient Rome. Does the world need another textbook chronicling the disintegration of the Late Imperial West and the entrenchment of the Late Imperial East? This reviewer believes so.

Doug Lee is a veteran scholar who has already delivered major contributions to the studies of frontiers, warfare, and Christianity in Late Antiquity.[1] For the multi-authored Edinburgh series, however, he probably drew the short straw. In merely 300 pages Lee is forced to cover two centuries from the death of Julian to the death of Justinian (AD 363-565). The late fourth century and early sixth century respectively are exceptionally well documented, at least according to the standards of ancient history, thanks to the rich histories of Ammianus Marcellinus and Procopius, the legal codes, and a plethora of chronicles, letters, panegyrics, and other writings. There would have been rich pickings for at least two separate volumes. This is all the more remarkable when comparing this volume in this series with Clifford Ando's *Imperial Rome AD 193-284*, where equal space is given to one of the most poorly documented single centuries in Rome's history. Furthermore, the choice to start the final volume with the death of Julian is a rather unusual one as Lee himself concedes (p. xiii), given that the major turbulent changes setting both halves of the Empire on fundamentally different courses would only come to full fruition with the death of Theodosius I in 395 (a terminal point more widely used, as noticed in the aforementioned works of Bury, Cameron, and Moorhead). Lee's choice to end the volume with the death of Justinian is certainly more orthodox, though it could have helped to take the volume up to the death of Heraclius (641) which saw the advent of Islam and the final eclipse of the Ancient World.

Lee is aware of these constraints and, rather than throwing the reader in at the deep end, he offers a concise yet vital introduction to the major political, religious, and cultural dynamics of the earlier fourth century (pp. 1-16) and a breviloquent epilogue on Justinian's successors and the Arabic conquests in the Levant (pp. 297-300). At the heart of the book lie four chapters charting the transformation of Imperial Roman power, as it shifted towards the east and crumbed in the west.

Chapter 1 deals with 'The Later Fourth Century' (pp. 19-78), effectively covering the reign of the Valentinian dynasty and Theodosius I (AD 364-395). A first positive surprise is that Lee treats both secular and ecclesiastical events even-handedly. When reviewing the aforementioned work of Peter Heather and Bryan Ward-Perkins' *The Fall of Rome*, James O'

[1] A.D. Lee *Information and frontiers. Roman foreign relations in late antiquity*, (Cambridge 1993); *Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity* (London 2000); *War in Late Antiquity. A Social History* (Malden 2007). One should also note his chapters in the final two volumes of the *Cambridge Ancient History*.

Donnell once remarked on 'their disinclination to speak of religion – Christianity barely mentioned, paganism only a whisper, and neither book mentions Jews in its index at all' (BMCR, 2005-07-69). In contrast, Lee gives proper due to all religious groups throughout the book. Indeed, one can hardly disagree with his statement that 'for many in contemporary, post-Christian, western society, it can be difficult to understand how disagreements over the seeming niceties of theological terminology could generate such passions and unwillingness to compromise. But for those involved at the time, these were not just matters for academic debate.' (p. 134).

Chapter 2 examines 'The Long Fifth Century' (pp. 81-195) from the death of Theodosius I to the accession of Justin I (AD 395-518). This period is often conceived as the 'fall' of the (western) Roman Empire, and many scholars narrating this critical century are usually too engrossed in the Late Imperial West's disintegration to venture east of Constantinople (the present reviewer being one of those culprits). Lee, however, gives equal attention to the various conflicts between barbarian groups, Roman *generalissimos* and imperial courts at both Ravenna and Constantinople. This is a rare and commendable choice since few Anglophone histories properly treat fifth-century eastern Roman events as an integral and parallel part of this period. This chapter is especially noteworthy for its subtle approach to themes such as 'Romans and Barbarians' (pp. 110-33) and the religious disputes surrounding the great Councils (pp. 134-58). While Lee's account of the disintegration of the Imperial West and the establishment of the various 'barbarian' kingdoms is conventional, he at least draws sufficient attention to the debate regarding *hospitalitas* and the settlement of these armed non-Imperial groups on Roman provincial soil (pp. 128-33).

Chapter 3, 'Longer Term Trends' (pp. 199-239), breaks with the chronological approach and provides a *longue durée* approach for themes such as 'Urban Change' (pp. 199-222) and 'Economic Patterns' (pp. 222-39). This is the shortest chapter, but deftly makes use of archaeological data from key sites to map the different fortunes and vicissitudes of cities and trade across the Roman Empire, while also providing brief but insightful excursions on topics such as popular riots (pp. 214-18) and education (pp. 219-22). Lee shows himself at his most nuanced here, marking the vibrancy of a supraregional economy for most of the period, despite the contraction of political power in key western areas. Finally, Chapter 4 surveys 'The age of Justinian' (pp. 243-98), marking both the splendour and controversies of his early reign, the various conflicts with Sassanian Persia, the subjugation of Vandal Africa and Ostrogothic Italy, and the dire aftermath of the later wars of attrition in conjunction with the great pandemic of 542.

It is only naturally, with a work spanning such a vast period, that points of contention will arise. The notion that the Thracian commander Vitalian was 'clearly the most important influence at [Justin I's] court until his murder in 520' (p. 177) is fascinating, but difficult to establish since we know so little of the circumstances surrounding his amnesty and brief tenure as *magister militum*. More problematic is the repeated notion that imperial power ended in the West with the deposition of Romulus Augustulus in 476 (pp. 101, 191, 302). Earlier, Lee does acknowledge that the year did not have the same momentous significance for contemporaries as it was to have for future generations of modern scholars. While he takes note of Brian Croke's seminal work on the fabrication of 476's symbolic value in sixth-century Constantinopolitan sources,[2] he essentially follows the old-fashioned tradition by stating that 'the reach of imperial power steadily contracted … until, in 476, it disappeared completely' (p. 101). At the very least, from a purely constitutional view Romulus was nothing but a petty usurper and a safer date to mark the end of *legitimate western emperorship* is the death of Julius Nepos in 480.

[2] B. Croke '476: The manufacture of a turning point', *Chiron* 13 (1983) 81-119.

It is a testament to Lee's erudition, however, that in a book covering such a wealth of detail in such confined space, there is hardly anything else to staunchly refute. Lee not only provides his readers with the most up-to-date Anglophone scholarship but also takes note of key publications in French, German and Italian, thus transcending this book's primary target audience of students – many of whom will rarely have mastered all relevant languages – and making it just as valuable for scholars. Eight maps provide a rudimentary but adequate outline of the various stages of the Empire's transformation. In contrast, Lee takes effort to provide illustrations of artworks one seldom encounters across similar books, such as the consular diptych of Flavius Aëtius (pp. 88-9), the wooden carving of a besieged city (p. 129) and even a gambling machine with reliefs of chariot racing (p. 212). Similarly, source excerpts are not only drawn from the 'usual suspects' among classicizing historiographers, but also include inscriptions, poetry, and passages from the council acts. Last but definitely not least, it has to be acknowledged that the book is a pleasure to read thanks to its lucid and crisp prose.

As it stands, this is the most thorough yet accessible overview of Imperial Rome's twilight centuries since Ernst Stein's *Histoire du Bas Empire*. The present reviewer could think of no higher endorsement.

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