Maskarinec, Maya. *City of Saints: Rebuilding Rome in the Early Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. 978-0-8122-5008-4. 320 Pages. 21 color, 33 b/w illus. Paperback $45.00; Hardback $55.00.

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As one moves about the Roman Forum, Colosseum, and Palatine Hill, the area's ruins convey the city's imperial past and its architectural grandeur. Likewise, the city's late medieval and early modern structures remind us of the longstanding centrality of Rome in Christian history. For the casual observer, one sees two Romes, that of the ancient empire and that of the papacy, with the early Middle Ages lost to all but the most informed observer. And on the whole, the scholarship on Rome has tended to gravitate toward these two polarities. Thus, even for scholars of Rome, it can be quite difficult to figure out where the sixth through ninth centuries fit in the city's history and development.

In recent years, thankfully, there has been renewed investigation of late antique and early medieval Rome: improving our knowledge are new studies on the Aurelian Walls, apse mosaics, individual popes and patrons, and Hendrik Dey's reassessment of Richard Krautheimer's still essential *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (1980).[1] Rather than presenting Rome as mired in the Dark Ages and disconnected from a wider world, these studies compel us to focus not on what it would become or what it once was, but to study Rome's organic changes as a city and where Rome fit into the larger geopolitical, cultural, economic, religious, and artistic landscapes of the early medieval Mediterranean. To understand early medieval Rome, in other words, means neither lamenting the decline of Roman imperial power in Italy nor anticipating the rise of the papacy; it means, rather, focusing on how the city evolved and responded to new conditions.

Contributing to this conversation is Maya Maskarinec's *City of Saints: Rebuilding Rome in the Early Middle Ages*. Scouring the city's topographical and hagiographical landscapes, Maskarinec argues for what she calls an ecosystem of sanctity and storehouse of saints that served the needs of Romans and visitors alike. It has long been known that Rome in this period became a locus of veneration of a wide array of saints. However, as Maskarinec convincingly argues, one subset of saints allows for a deeper understanding of the city of Rome in the period and its place in the wider Mediterranean: saints venerated in Rome but whose deaths took place overwhelmingly in the Eastern Mediterranean. By focusing on Eastern saints venerated in Rome as well as the physical spaces in which that veneration took place, Maskarinec follows the work of numerous scholars, beginning with Peter Brown, who reject the idea of late antiquity as a break from the past. In particular, Maskarinec wants us to push against the narrative "of the inevitable rise of a Rome destined for Christian primacy, shepherded through the 'Dark Ages' by powerful popes" (3) and compels us to consider the appeal of saints whose place of origin and/or death functioned to

maintain Rome's ties with the wider Mediterranean. Moreover, by showing how hagiography and veneration were entangled in the physical evolution of the city, Maskarinec shows how the cults of these saints shaped Rome's urban development, turning Rome into "a city of saints embedded in an imperial and early Christian past" (7).

The book unfolds over eight chapters, an epilogue, and several appendices that dive deeper into a number of crucial sources. Chapter One leads the reader on a walk on a "sunny day in early April 752" (11). It moves from the extramural basilicas to within the Aurelian Walls. Maskarinec underscores both the topography of the city as well as which saints were venerated where and why. For those familiar with Rome, this is a lovely chapter to follow, as it recalls intimate places. For those who do not know Rome well, this chapter might be initially overwhelming, but if read with care it is a useful chapter for novices; moreover, the effect of being overwhelmed by just how many saints and sites Maskarinec mentions has a powerful rhetorical effect, as it did on my students, and prepares the reader well for the chapters that follow. It is also a teachable chapter on site, allowing students to recreate much of the walk for themselves.

The subsequent chapters trace a chorological narrative of the city's evolution and focus on specific sites. Similar to Chapter One, readers with a variety of familiarity with Rome will find within the following chapters insights that help them discover or rethink Rome anew. Chapters Two and Three present the Roman Forum and imperial grounds of the Palatine Hill as an ideological battleground between competing forces—Ostrogoths, Byzantines, popes, Romans—that allowed for the expansion of the veneration of Eastern saints. These two chapters remind us that Rome's ancient core remained an active site across the Middle Ages, and was not abandoned, which remains a misconception of medieval Rome. In the Forum, for example, Maskarinec's discussion of Pope Felix IV's decision to dedicate a church there to Saints Cosmas and Damian, martyrs from Arabia killed in Roman Syria, reflects his allegiance to the emperor Justinian and how the new church "anchored Rome into this wider web of Justinian's vision of a unified Christian Roman Empire" (34). By contrast, in Chapter Three, the competition between various popes and emperors in the seventh century led to popes to claim the Palatine Hill, the location of the old imperial palace as well as the cult of the African martyr St. Caesarius, as a site of papal power to exert independence from Constantinople.

Chapters Four and Five move beyond the old imperial core to the Tiber River banks (Chapter Four) and the Aventine Hill (Chapter Five). In Chapter Four, papal efforts to control *diaconiae*–Rome's charitable institutions along the Tiber often dedicated to Eastern saints—illustrate how the popes increasingly positioned themselves as political forces in the city of Rome while maintaining larger Mediterranean connections through the veneration of Eastern saints. Chapter Five's study of the Aventine Hill focuses on Santa Sabina and SS. Bonifacio e Alessio, two churches dedicated to foreign saints who were paradoxically unique to Rome. Of particular note is how the Aventine became home to émigrés from the Eastern Mediterranean, positioning Rome as not only connected to the wider world but a pan-Mediterranean Christian refuge in an age of turmoil.

The final three chapters explore the papacy's continued push away from Byzantine control through increased papal patronage in religious institutions, relics of Eastern saints, and representations of the papacy as heirs of Roman Empire on one hand, and the Carolingians' increased desire to strengthen ties with Rome as the home of the universal church for its own political and religious

motivations on the other. Chapter Six explores how Rome became a "storehouse of Christian sanctity" (118) that positioned it and the papacy as indispensable conduits to the cults of numerous saints, many of whom originated in the Eastern Mediterranean. In Chapter Seven, Rome as a saintly repository drew the attention of the Carolingians, who increasingly interacted with Rome "as a city of martyrs and monuments, as the seat of the papacy, and as a model for empire" (138), which manifested in the creation of sites in Northern Europe that echoed Rome's importance. Lastly, in Chapter Eight, Maskarinec's study of Ado of Vienne's martyrology serves as a synthesis of sorts for the entanglement of Carolingian reception of Rome as well as Rome's efforts to present itself as the center of the universal church.

Finally, in the epilogue, Maskarinec reminds us that "In building a new Rome, these saints from abroad ensured that the expansive geographical imagination that had once characterized imperial Rome became a feature of its Christian instantiation" (171). This concluding point is central for understanding the goals of this book. Yes, Rome was no longer the center of the Roman Empire and the city's population dwindled to a fraction of its imperial height. Yet, as Maskarinec convincingly shows us, Rome was still Rome, and it remained an important city in the early medieval Mediterranean world because of its religious topography and historical importance. Through her exploration of the city's topographical and spiritual evolution, Maskarinec presents no Dark Age, but a vibrant early medieval Rome worthy of investigation alongside the imperial and papal periods that have garnered far more attention. In sum, *City of Saints* is a must read for those whose understanding of Rome and its place in the early medieval Mediterranean is colored by this historiographical oversight and who hope to see that the early Middle Ages are essential for seeing how ancient and later periods of the city's history remain in dialogue to this day.

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Author's Response:
The author was provided with an opportunity to respond to the review, but declined.

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[1] Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Caroline J. Goodson, *The Rome of Pope Paschal I: Papal Power, Urban Renovation, Church Rebuilding and Relic Translation, 817-824* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Hendrik W. Dey, *The Aurelian Wall and the Refashioning of Imperial Rome, A.D. 271-855* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Erik Thunø, *The Apse Mosaic in Early Medieval Rome: Time, Network, and Repetition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Michele Renee Salzman, *The "Falls" of Rome: Crises, Resilience, and Resurgence in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Gregor Kalas and Ann van Dijk, eds., *Urban Developments in Late Antique and Medieval Rome. Revising the Narrative of Renewal.* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021); Hendrik W. Dey, *The Making of Medieval Rome: A New Profile of the City, 400-1450* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021).