Introduction

In early 392, emperor Valentinian II of the western Roman Empire sat upon his throne in Vienne and watched the approach of the army general named Arbogast. This man was the west's sole *magister militum*, the highest-ranking officer of all the western forces, but his authority stretched much further than military affairs. For about a year, the *magister* had dictated the western Empire's political and military policies, controlling where the Roman armies campaigned, filling the civil bureaucracy with his own cronies, and relegating the emperor to only ceremonial and religious duties.[1] Arbogast had even recently personally executed Armonius, the son of a consul and personal friend of Valentinian, as the man cowered at the emperor's feet.[2] But Valentinian had decided the time was ripe to rid himself of this powerful menace. Relying on his authority as a Roman emperor, the supreme rulers of the Roman world for over four-hundred years, in court and in front of all his officials, Valentinian handed Arbogast a letter of dismissal, removing him from imperial service.[3] Arbogast took the letter, read it once, and derisively tore it up and threw it on the ground in a stark refusal. In a rage, the emperor ran to one of his bodyguards and tried to draw the man's sword to strike at Arbogast, but the soldier easily fended off his attempts.[4] Even though an emperor had the technical authority to execute whomever he pleased, Arbogast clearly held much greater power.

The *magistri militum* had not always overshadowed the Roman emperors. In 357, emperor Constantius II dismissed the *magister militum* Marcellus from military service for reasons the general thought were unfair.[5] The only option available to Marcellus, however, was to complain and protest the command in the imperial capital.[6] Disobedience to the order was not a possibility. Similarly, in 359, the *magister* Ursicinus was found guilty of not adequately safeguarding the city of Amida (Diyarbakır, Turkey),

1 Greg. Tur. *HF* 2.9.
2 Joh. Ant. fr. 187 (Müller) = fr. 212 (Mariev); Greg. Tur. *HF* 2.9; Paschoud 2006, 336.
3 Zos. 4.53.2–3; Joh. Ant. fr. 187 (Müller) = fr. 212 (Mariev).
4 Philost. *HE* 11.1.
5 AM 16.7.1–3, 10.21; Lib. *Or.* 18.48; Hunt 1997b, 50; Drinkwater 2007, 227–8.
6 AM 16.7.1–2.

even though he had tried to do exactly that but was refused the necessary soldiers.[7] In anger, he insulted the same emperor, Constantius II, and was immediately cashiered as punishment. Once the order for dismissal came from the emperor, there was nothing Ursicinus could do. Marcellus' and Ursicinus' examples are emblematic of the *magistri* during the 340s to 370s, a period in which the impact of the generals on the wider political landscape was deftly controlled by the emperors. Those who were pushed too far only had the traditional path of a dissatisfied Roman general: usurpation. Defying the emperor's authority without challenging his position was not yet a possibility. Thus, an extreme change had occurred between this period and the time when Arbogast could bluntly refuse an order from the emperor.

Arbogast is an extreme example of the power of the *magistri militum*, but he is not an isolated case. Multiple *magistri* gained similar levels of hegemony over the western Empire, a trend that would continue into the fifth century. One aspect of this phenomenon is found in the person who occupied the position of emperor. Constantius II had had military commands since 336, and by the 350s he was an adept ruler with over a decade of experience as an independent Augustus, and he had developed a robust and broad patronage network.[8] Valentinian II, on the other hand, had been made emperor as a four-year old child by civil and military bureaucrats who used him as a pawn to secure their own power. He had not gained independence from his half-brother until 383, and even then, he had not commanded soldiers in any military operations, nor had he won the loyalty of the western court. Valentinian is one of the child-emperors of the late imperial period that represents a dramatic weakening of the imperial office, and this development has been examined by the likes of Meaghan McEvoy.[9] Powerful emperors like Constantius, or Julian, Valentinian, Theodosius I, and others, mostly had firm control over their generals, and this has led to many scholars attributing the developments in the *magisterium* to top-down, institutional reforms and legal directives. We must remember, however, that Constantius had also been a child-emperor, as he was raised in 324 at just seven years old, yet he was able to grow into a position of power.[10] The key difference between Constantius' development and Valentinian's stagnation was the men who served in the civil and military bureaucracy and how their vision of the imperial office changed it into something they could annex for their own benefit. These men prohibited the child-emperors from gaining an active role in governing the Empire. It is thus my contention that significant changes occurred to the power balance of the fourth-century Empire, and the inversion of the traditional emperor-general power balance is the result of a bot-

7 AM 19.3.1–2, however this story is told by Ammianus Marcellinus, an officer who served Ursicinus and was not entirely objective when it came to his patron.

8 *Cons. Const.* s. a. 324; Jul. *Or.* 1.13b.

9 McEvoy 2013.

10 Vanderspoel 2020.

tom-up process, attributable to the *magistri militum* using successive moments of crisis to adapt the dynamic to suit their desires.

The political and civil realms are intertwined in Roman power dynamics. Throughout this book we will be examining the nature of the *magistri*'s involvement in leading soldiers and conducting war, but also in affairs outside the traditional scope of a general's purview. These realms had long been combined in the Roman world. The political success of emperors was intrinsically tied to their military capabilities, real or perceived. Although the civil and military career paths had been separated during the fourth century, the consulship remained as the shared peak of both career paths. Generals also regularly sat as judges in legal disputes. They were also deeply involved in the changing religious landscape of the Empire. Early in the fourth century, Christianity endured extreme persecution by the state, only to replace Greco-Roman Polytheism as the Empire's dominant religion.[11] This change ushered in a decline of polytheism, or as it is known by the common Christian pejorative 'paganism', and by 415 pagans would be formally excluded from military service.[12] Christianity experienced multiple schisms, heresies, and theological disputes during this period of change, and we will see how the military leadership became involved in these developments. Additionally, the religious role of the emperors became significantly more pronounced, and the importance of their military role declined. Although many bureaucrats and aristocrats were involved in spurring on and taking advantage of this process, the *magistri* stood to gain the most if the emperors were reduced to ceremonial duties and military command was permanently shifted away from them and given entirely to the *magistri*. Because of the close intertwining of the military, political, judicial, and religious realms of the late Empire, we will not just be looking at when and how the *magistri* acted outside the military sphere, but the process through which they did, or did not, dominate areas other than the military.

It is important to define exactly who these generals were and how they were referred to. The circumstances of the creation of this office will be discussed in Chapter One, and their variegated roles and duties will be explored throughout every section. We have already been using the term *magister militum* ('master of the soldiers') to refer to these highest-ranking generals, but this is a matter of convention. At first, the evidence indicates that the generals were called *magister equitum* ('master of the cavalry') and *magister peditum* ('master of the infantry'). It was only later that some generals began to have the title *magister equitum et peditum*, and this was simplified into *magister militum*, which has become, along with the term *magisterium*, the standard form of referring to the office in modern literature. Other titles in use by our sources include

11 On the persecutions, see: Barnes 1996, 542–52; Clarke 2005, 650–1. On the end of the persecutions and Christianity's eventual dominance, see: Corcoran 2012, 52; Drake 2005, 121–23; 2009, 216; Lenski 2017, 27; Barnes 1995; 2014, 74–80, 93–97; Chadwick 1997.

12 Stoll 2007, 471–73.

magister militiae ('master of the military'), *magister armorum* ('master of weapons'), *magister utriusque militiae* ('master of both militaries'), as well as the more generic titles of *dux*, *rector*, and *comes*, all various forms of military leadership. Where the sources are clear and consistent on an individual's title, I will use it in the body of this text. Where the sources are not so transparent, and when referring to the office as a whole, *magister militum* will be used. Titles that will not be used at all are *magister militum praesens* and *praesentalis*. These titles are often used by scholars to describe a general that spent the majority of their career serving 'in the presence' of an emperor or in the imperial court, in contrast to other generals that had postings in the provinces. These terms, however, first appear in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, and only rarely in later sources.[13] Given the uncertain reliability of the *Notitia*, we should not use the terms *praesens* or *praesentalis* as a magisterial title earlier than the close of the fourth century without proper acknowledgment of its un-technical nature.

To explore the role of the *magistri militum* in the changing later Roman Empire, this monograph will synthesize chronological narrative, prosopographical investigation, and the network analysis methodology. Chapter One will use the concepts of archontology – that is, the study of historical offices and the people who held them in a narrative, progressive form, to describe the *magistri* from their first appearances under the heirs of Constantine I through the reigns of emperor Jovian, covering the years 341 to 363. The depth of source material available for this period we will allow us to deduce the nature of the magisterial office and what the scope of its duties were intended to be. By exploring in-depth the usurpations of Vetranio and Silvanus we will better understand the methods available to the early *magistri* to express their ambition and power and how these rebellions will influence later generals. How the *magistri* were used by Julian to strengthen his regime will also be examined. It will be argued that in these years the *magistri* generally obeyed the emperors, and their powers did not overshadow imperial authority.

Chapter Two will then continue the chronological perspective from Valentinian I's accession in 364 and proceed until the death of emperor Theodosius I in 395. This chapter will endeavor to describe how the power of the *magistri* began to diverge between the east and the west. The Gothic war along the Danube frontier (376–382) prompted an enlargement of the eastern *magisterium*, which caused the command over the armies to be partitioned amongst multiple generals. This allowed officials in the civil administration to counter and overshadow the influence of the *magistri*. Conversely, in the west, the *magister* Merobaudes was able to take full advantage of a succession crisis that occurred in 375 to dramatically increase his own position by installing the figurehead child-emperor, Valentinian II. Merobaudes was followed by Bauto, Arbogast, and Stilicho, non-Roman – or 'barbarian' – *magistri* who continued to dominate the west-

13 This was even noted as rare by Mommsen 1901, 532 n. 4, but the term has continued to be used.

ern emperors and all western affairs. These first two chapters will also delineate the responsibilities and powers of the *magistri* in this period.

The *magistri militum* of this period formed complex relationships with subordinate officers, civilian officials, and other important members of the Roman world, and the systems of patronage that were developed played a critical role in the failure or success of different generals. Chapter Three will thus use network analysis to assess these connections. This methodology has only recently begun to be applied to studies in Late Antiquity, and so this chapter will explain the principles and theories that will be utilized to explore how networks of relationships affected the *magistri*. Through two case studies, it will be shown that those who were able to utilize networks of relationships effectively had much greater success than those who did not.

The final chapter will contain two prosopographical studies on the fourth-century *magistri militum*. Rather than solely focusing on the most well-documented and well-studied individuals, this chapter will examine all the *magistri* and draw conclusions on them as a collective. The career paths that brought a man to the *magisterium* will be reconstructed and compared to the earlier and later career paths to determine if there are any distinguishing features that further illuminate the nature of the magisterial offices, and why particular *magistri* came to such heights of power. The second section will examine the origins and identification of the *magistri*. This analysis will be framed in light of the ongoing debate over the barbarization of the late Roman military. Accompanied by graphs and tables, these prosopographical analyses will focus on delineating the important characteristics shared by the *magistri*.

Three diverse but symbiotic approaches to historical investigation are thus synthesized in this work. By combining the statistical results of the prosopography with the context gained from the narrative and network analyses, it will be identified how certain decisive moments in the fourth century's military history were taken advantage of by the *magistri* to impact greatly the nature of their role in politics. These successive events compounded the power of the *magistri* until they became the most influential individuals in the western Empire, overshadowing the emperors themselves. Furthermore, unique traits can be identified for the *magistri* who gained the greatest degrees of power, suggesting that they were somewhat predisposed to take advantage of these decisive moments. Identifying these traits can help us better understand why these developments occurred.

State of the Question

Peter Brown's 1971 work on the religious and cultural developments of Late Antiquity invigorated interest in this era and reframed the way scholars envisioned it, yet the last major study on the *magistri militum* predates Brown by a year.[1] The intervening decades have produced excellent works on the fifth-century *magistri*, as well as many works on the late Roman military in general, and even on individual *magistri*, but the study of the impact of fourth-century military leadership has slowed significantly. The absence of recent broad and critical coverage of the *magisterium* has made it commonplace for works not directly addressing military issues to leave the *magistri* on the sidelines of Late Antiquity. This shows itself in cases such as the civil war of the early 390s, which is often framed as a contest between emperors Eugenius and Theodosius even though the former was only a puppet controlled by the *magister militum* Arbogast.[2] This general should be seen as holding as much control over the western Empire as we are more often inclined to see with figures like Ricimer in the fifth century. It has even been said that there is no benefit from considering the motivations of military leaders.[3] The role of civilian bureaucrats in the nomination of new emperors has been emphasized on the basis that military officials rarely tried to put themselves on the throne, so they must not have held much sway.[4] This shows a lack of understanding of the motivations of the *magistri militum* and how they reshaped the imperial office into one that they could control without assuming the risks of the imperial position themselves. This topic thus dearly needs a revisit to bring our understanding of the *magistri* up to the modern standard.

The historical importance of the *magistri* ensured they featured in the earliest works on the end of the Roman Empire, but it was Theodor Mommsen who first conducted an investigation of the military *magisterium* itself.[5] He approached the generals with a macro, institutional perspective, where changes in the office were seen as legal man-

1 Brown 1971; Demandt 1970.
2 Lee 2007, 9; Christie 2013, 940; Elton 2018, 114, 117; Szidat 2010, 239. Cf. Kulikowski 2019, 92; Meier 2020, 44. See Chapter 2.6 for more.
3 Lee 2007, 67.
4 Szidat 2010, 107, 140.
5 Mommsen 1889. Some of these early works include Tillemont 1701–1704; Gibbon 1781.

dates coming down from the emperors, and we will see how this has dictated the orientation of almost all ensuing studies. From the evidence in Zosimus and John Lydus, Mommsen deduces that the positions of *magister peditum* and *magister equitum* were created by emperor Constantine I (306–337) as a continuation of emperor Diocletian's (284–305) removal of military authority from the powerful Praetorian Prefects to reduce their ability to usurp imperial power.[6] Mommsen continued his description of the magisterial office by drawing heavily on the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Because the western list places *magister peditum praesentalis* first, Mommsen concludes that the *magister peditum* outranked the *magister equitum* in the west, and he assumes that this was the original hierarchy created by Constantine.[7] He further argues that emperor Theodosius I (379–395) reformed the system in the east and made all his *magistri* equal to one another, and he believes this explains the differences both between the different magisterial titles and the different number of *magistri* between the east and the west.[8] Reliance on the *Notitia* by Mommsen is rather unfortunate given the challenges that come with this source. It is increasingly believed that the *Notitia* was created with an ideological, rather than administrative purpose. Furthermore, at best it only offers a single frozen snapshot in time, while the military *magisterium* was constantly changing in practice. Thus, while not deliberately misleading, the intention of the *Notitia* appears to be neither accuracy nor technicality, and thus the order different offices are listed in is slim evidence for deducing a bureaucratic hierarchy.

A later work of Mommsen's seems to have attempted to find a new, non-institutional perspective by constructing a biography of the fifth-century *magister* Aetius, but half the essay became a revision of his earlier work on the institution as a whole.[9] Otto Seeck, a protégé of Mommsen, continued the same macro-approach to the *magisterium* in an attempt to refine the creation date of the *magistri militum*.[10] He postulates that Constantine's incentive was protecting his sons from usurpation as they became emperors. The office thus may have appeared when Crispus was appointed Caesar in Gaul in 318. A few years later, Arthur Boak examined the developments in the differing titulature of the *magistri*, as well as the chronology of the creation of regional commands.[11] Boak heavily incorporated the *Codices Theodosianus* and *Justinianus*, but like Mommsen, he also relied upon extrapolating information from the *Notitia*.

Research into the *magistri* was continued by Ernst Nischer, who summarized the roles of the different positions and added to the discussion of how each transformed, while Ernst Stein made further deductions on the creation of different magisterial of-

6 Mommsen 1889, 260, citing Zos. 2.33.3 and Joh. Lyd. *de mag.* 2.10.
7 Mommsen 1889, 262–64.
8 Mommsen 1889, 265.
9 Mommsen 1901.
10 Seeck 1894.
11 Boak 1915, 118–37.

fices.[12] Wilhelm Enßlin challenged Mommsen's conclusion that the *magister peditum* began as the highest ranked office, instead arguing that the *magister equitum* was superior on the basis that earlier sources almost always list *equitum* generals before their *peditum* colleagues.[13] He also added that we do not know of any *magistri equitum* who became *magistri peditum*, but he believes we can identify two *magistri peditum*, Flavius Sallustius Bonosus and Victor, who became *magistri equitum*. On the basis that these men had done nothing to be demoted, he concluded that this change must have been a promotion upwards, and therefore the *equitum* position was the higher one. However, it is now believed that the man identified as Flavius Sallustius Bonosus is actually the conglomeration of two distinct people, Flavius Iulius Sallustius and Flavius Bonosus.[14] Furthermore, it will be argued below that we cannot be certain that Victor was ever a *magister peditum*.[15] Thus, Enßlin's arguments were based on flawed information. A few years later, André Hoepffner authored a response to Enßlin, and he argues that rather than indicating a hierarchy, *equitum* preceding the word *peditum* might be a result of something as simple as alphabetic order, and he cautioned against some of Enßlin's other arguments.[16] This led him to the conclusion that the *magister equitum* and *peditum* were probably identical in authority, which would make sense in regards to both the Roman preference for collegiality, and Constantine's intention of limiting the power of the generals – making some generals more powerful than others would not effectively reduce their power. Hoepffner also argues that the equalization of the magisterial hierarchy occurred in the reign of Valentinian I (364–375), rather than Mommsen's placement with Theodosius I.

Although the *magistri* were not the primary focus in the works of Denis van Berchem and Dietrich Hoffmann, they further developed our understanding of the wider military reforms of the period, although some of their conclusions have since been updated.[17] Herbert Nesselhauf continued to rely heavily upon the *Notitia* in his study of the western Empire's administration, and Wilhelm Heil further described the military reforms of Constantine.[18] Scholarship on the late Roman military was then benefitted by Alexander Demandt's 1970 contribution to one of the standard reference works for the study of Greco-Roman history in Late Antiquity, the *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, which remains the authoritative work *par excellence*.[19] Demandt collates and critiques previous scholarship, and acknowledges the problems in heavy

12 Nischer 1928; Stein 1928, 186–88, 366–368.
13 Enßlin 1930, 312–13. Also see: Enßlin 1931a, 1931b.
14 See page 34.
15 See pages 69–70.
16 Hoepffner 1936, 487–95.
17 Berchem 1952; Hoffmann 1969–70. For developments on Hoffmann's ideas on the *seniores* and *iuniores* unis, see: Drew-Bear 1977; Scharf 1991; Nicasie 1998, 24–35.
18 Nesselhauf 1938; Heil 1966.
19 Demandt 1970.

reliance upon the *Notitia*. The issues of previous historians are remedied by affording equal weight to other sources. The comprehensiveness and breadth of this work created an excellent platform for future authors to incorporate the *magistri* into many works on varied aspects of the late Roman world. Nonetheless, problems persist. Sources in languages other than Latin and Greek were not incorporated, and he seems to have remained limited to previous foci. Demandt surmises his most significant conclusions to be further answers to the original questions Mommsen posed: the titles, hierarchies, and the creation of new offices.

Since Demandt, there has been no dedicated study with the same scope. Hoffmann provides another discussion of the different offices that held regional commands in the late Roman military, including how the regional magisterial commands developed over the fourth century and why new titles appeared.[20] However, despite Demandt's expression of reservations, Hoffmann still heavily relies on the *Notitia*, asserting that the military administration in the western Empire remained essentially unchanged from Constantine to Theodosius I and that there were always two *magistri* in every imperial court.[21] Throughout this book it will become clear that the military *magisterium* was actually employed in an ad hoc, ever-changing manner, with the placement and number of *magistri* continually shifting.

Manfred Waas and Hans Teitler both studied specific subsets of the *magistri*, and the generals feature prominently in studies such as Raban von Haeling's work on the religious associations of late officials.[22] Giovanni Cecconi looks at the *magister militum* and the *magister officiorum* and how the separation of military and civil authority, as well as that of palatine and regional postings, was not actually as starkly divided as previously thought.[23] Instead, they were fluid and changeable, being more or less separated in different periods depending on the actions of the individuals. These are ideas that will be explored further in the body of this book. Doug Lee has recently emphasized the importance of military generals to the political stability of the late Empire.[24] Their control over the armies meant that securing their loyalty was paramount to the emperors, and they tried to win the *magistri* and their soldiers through donatives, tax privileges, the *acclamatio*, and use of fellowship language. There were also several forms of reprimand and punishments that emperors utilized to keep their officers in line.

Marc Landelle has recently argued that the *magistri* may have been created later than previously thought, around 328, to relieve the Praetorian Prefects of their military duties as they were becoming overwhelmed with the broad scope of their positions.[25]

20 Hoffmann 1974.
21 Hoffmann 1974, 387–94.
22 Waas 1971; Teitler 1989; Haeling 1978.
23 Cecconi 1999.
24 Lee 2015.
25 Landelle 2016.

It is unlikely that this date, or any of proposed alternatives, will be conclusively settled on, as they all have minimal, if any, solid evidence, but Landelle's idea is compelling. Landelle additionally takes a different view than most historians to contend that the *magister peditum* and *equitum* had different duties, namely that when not actively campaigning, the *magister peditum* oversaw the infantry, while the *equitum* general oversaw the cavalry.[26] He makes this argument on the basis that the logistics of cavalry units, incorporating both men and animals, are significantly more complex than the logistics of infantry, and therefore they needed a dedicated commander. However, we must remember that cavalry was only a small percentage of the Roman military, and the logistics for managing tens of thousands of infantry probably matched, if not exceeded, the difficulty of managing a much smaller number of cavalry. Furthermore, *magistri* with either *equitum* or *peditum* titles often operated alone away from the emperors or a counterpart *magister*, and therefore must have managed the logistics for both cavalry and infantry simultaneously. This argument is therefore unconvincing.

Studies of the late Roman military as a whole bear mentioning here, as they have remained popular with scholars and non-expert audiences, and have contributed to our understanding of the military-political landscape.[27] David Potter and Michael Kulikowski have offered fantastic insights on the growing autonomy of the civilian and military bureaucracies in the later fourth century, a framework that is drawn upon in this book to illustrate the increasing power of the *magistri*.[28] Lee also examines the social impact of late Roman warfare.[29] These are just some of the highlights of the many works on the wider role of the military in the late Roman world.

Overall, the fourth-century *magistri* have mostly been approached with macro-analyses of the institution and its organization. The changes that occurred during the fourth century have been concluded to be products of legislation and intentional reform by the emperors. Power and influence have been attributed to a person's position as *magister equitum* or *peditum*, whichever the author believed to be of higher rank, or to the status as a *praesentalis* or regional general.

A number of articles and smaller works have taken a different tack and concerned themselves with issues of individual *magistri*. Bruno Bleckmann, John Drinkwater, and Alan Dearn have successively reassessed the portrayal of the *magister* Vetranio and his rebellion.[30] E.A. Thompson devotes a chapter of his monograph to revealing the problems in Ammianus' portrayal of the *magister* Ursicinus, while Drinkwater reconsiders this general's role in the rebellion of the *magister* Silvanus.[31] David Woods

26 Landelle 2014.
27 Ie. Dixon and Southern 1996; Elton 1996; Nicasie 1998; Goldsworthy 2003; Hebblewhite 2017; Elton 2018.
28 Potter 2004; Kulikowski 2019.
29 Lee 2007.
30 Bleckmann 1994; Drinkwater 2000; Dearn 2003.
31 Thompson 1947; Drinkwater 1994.

has also published numerous articles examining the accuracy of Ammianus' portrayal of military officers.[32] Authors such as Ian Hughes, Timo Stickler, Penny MacGeorge, Jeroen Wijnendaele, and Michael O'Flynn have also made excellent contributions with monographs on the most famous and well-documented fifth-century *magistri*.[33] These works made great progress by dispensing with the institutional approach and establishing the agency of individuals. By generally focusing on the most prominent *magistri*, however, the lesser-known generals and the information they can provide about the office is ignored. Nor is the accumulative effect of influential individuals tracked across a broad timespan.

The role of personal relationships with the emperors, colleagues, civil bureaucrats, religious leaders, foreign leaders, and other powerful individuals has also been poorly understood. Some of these problems have been addressed by scholars, although none are entirely satisfactory for the fourth century. For example, the topic of personal relationships was undertaken by David Parnell for the generals of the fifth- and sixth-century Byzantine Empire.[34] Meaghan McEvoy's discussion of the late Roman child-emperors also helps describe the developments that occurred in this timeframe, although the *magistri* themselves are not the focus of the text.[35] The same can be said about Mischa Meier's 2020 reassessment of the so-called Migration Period, which, while not focused on the *magistri*, does give due credit to the *magistri militum* and their critical role in the developments of the fourth and fifth centuries.[36]

This current work will try to avoid repeating the same institutional, top-down perspective of the military *magisterium*. Only limited space will be devoted to contributing more to questions such as the hierarchy of individual offices and postings, or the date of the creation of the *magisterium*. It is not my intention to assert that there is nothing left to say on these matters, but I believe we will be best served by concerning ourselves with a different focus. Although the emperors did have the legal authority to make appointments and changes to the military ministry, both to its members and the powers of the different offices, at some point this shifted, as demonstrated by Valentinian II in the introduction, and the emperors no longer made those changes but instead the *magistri* determined their own fortunes. The role of individuals in this long process is so far poorly understood. Employing the frameworks and methodology explained in the introduction to the *magistri* will modernize the research of the office and address the prevailing lacunae in the scholarship. By doing so, new considerations will be offered for the impact of the *magister militum* on the late Roman world.

32 Woods 1995; Woods 1997; Woods 1999; Woods 2001; Woods 2010; Woods 2016.

33 O'Flynn 1983; Stickler 2002; MacGeorge 2002; Hughes 2010; 2012; Wijnendaele 2015.

34 Parnell 2017.

35 McEvoy 2013.

36 Meier 2020.