Preface

The study presented here has its origins in the conference “Referenz Rom” organised by Marie-Theres Fögen of the Max Planck Institute for European Legal History, Frankfurt am Main, and held on 28th-30th September 2003. The manuscript which grew out of my initial contribution, “Rom und Erinnerung”, soon exceeded the subject matter of the conference, and expanded to become more than a mere paper or a simple article. “Romreferenz” became a study of the history of memory and the Donation of Constantine, and of the sources of that high- and late-medieval fiction with all the tangible, explosive consequences it had through the centuries. In the light of the new results of Klaus Zechiel-Eckes’ work on the origins of Pseudo-Isidore, there was clearly a need for a new study of the “Constitutum Constantini”, the document upon which the fiction of the Donation was based.

On a number of occasions I was able to present various stages of this work, and to discuss it – in Cologne, Düsseldorf and Bonn. In Frankfurt I enjoyed a continuous exchange of views with Wolfram Brandes that bore more fruits than just those points which are documented in the references; his own contribution is included here as an appendix. Heribert Müller proved himself a critical and sharp reader of an early draft, while Barbara Schlieben, Kerstin Schulmeyer-Ahl and Olaf Schneider repeatedly demonstrated their endless patience and scholarship in discussions of both individual points and the work as a whole. I am grateful to Wolfram Brandes, Alexander Demandt, Helmut Krasser, Hartmut Leppin and Peter von Möllendorff for publishing this study as a supplementary volume of “Millennium: Yearbook on the Culture and History of the First Millenium C. E.”. Inclusion in the series made publication in English desirable, and David Wigg-Wolf carried out the work of translation with great care and attention, in spite of repeated addenda and new additions by the author which delayed completion. My deep-felt thanks go to all of them. Kerstin Simon, Martin Dallmann and Roland Scheel carried out editorial work on the manuscript tenaciously and thoughtfully; Andreas Weidemann was responsible for the layout. To them too I am indebted.

Finally, it is a pleasure to thank my friend Maria R.-Alföldi, with whom I was not only able on many occasions to discuss the Roman perspective of this un-Roman fiction, but whose extensive knowledge, help in “procuring” literature otherwise all but inaccessible to a medievalist, rigorous criticism and continued pressure made this book possible in the first place.

It is an honour to dedicate it to her.