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BOOK REVIEWS

JENNIFER R. DAVIS and MICHAEL McCORMICK (eds.), *The Long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), xx + 345 pp. ISBN 978 0 7546 6254 9. £65.00

The 'decline and fall of the Roman Empire' was not followed by the twilight of the Dark Ages, but rather by the 'long morning of medieval Europe'. This is not news to scholars of early medieval history, but some of the approaches taken to this period by the participants at the conference 'New Directions 2: The Early Middle Ages Today', which was held at Harvard University in October 2004, are decidedly new. The length of time it has taken to compile and publish the ensuing volume of essays might have been due to the enormous task of interlinking the texts with one another. This has been admirably fulfilled: the volume is in five parts, all featuring introductions by Michael McCormick and concluding articles by different scholars, reflecting on the contributions to the section in question – integrated reviews, so to speak.

Part I, 'Discovering the Early Medieval Economy', begins with Chris Wickham's 'Rethinking the Structure of the Early Medieval Economy'. He lucidly summarizes earlier research, contrasting a 'production model' with a 'distribution model', and argues that the connections between production and distribution have hitherto not been sufficiently emphasized. After demonstrating how the kind of research he calls for can be implemented, Wickham concludes that the manufacturing of 'artisanal products' depended equally on the wealth of a region's elite and on long-distance trade. Additionally, he perceives an 'economic simplification' occurring in several regions between 400 and 700, often corresponding to political crises, whereas the complexity of the economy increased again between the sixth and ninth centuries. Wickham, whose conclusions are based mostly on archaeological evidence, rightly warns against generalizations, 'for the wider one attempts it, the more exceptions there are'. Joachim Henning's 'Strong Rulers – Weak Economy? Rome, the Carolingians

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and the Archaeology of Slavery in the First Millennium AD' continues the examination of productivity on an archaeological basis, comparing the late Roman and Carolingian countryside. His main conclusion differs from Wickham's: 'weak power structures were more innovative and efficient so long as they had access to the most advanced technical improvements of late antiquity.' The late Riccardo Francovich's 'The Beginnings of Hilltop Villages in Early Medieval Tuscany' argues against the view that there was no 'village organization' before the eleventh century. He also relies on archaeological evidence, and advocates reading the written sources against the background of models based on archaeological excavations. He then tries to match the archaeological evidence to the terminology for villages used in written sources, and draws the conclusion that nucleated settlements emerged much earlier than can be seen from the written evidence alone. In his 'Molecular Middle Ages: Early Medieval Economic History in the Twenty-First Century', Michael McCormick deals with historical biology and biomolecular archaeology, which can yield information about, for example, dietary habits. He focuses on DNA analyses conducted at Harvard University's laboratory of ancient DNA, and presents some possible outcomes for the interpretation of the two main pandemics of the Middle Ages, the Justinianic plague of the sixth to eighth centuries and the Black Death of the fourteenth century. McCormick readily acknowledges potential problems, but his enthusiasm arouses interest for these new directions of historical research. In her concluding article, 'The Early Medieval Economy: Data, Production, Exchange and Demand', the late Angeliki E. Laiou questions some of the premises behind Wickham's argument concerning the production of ceramics and warns against neglecting 'small-scale production/demand', although she supports Wickham's core thesis of 'elite demand'.

Part II, 'Sounding Early Medieval Holiness', is much shorter. Guy Philippart and Michel Trigalet present a part of their project HAGIOGRAPHIES,¹ a quantitative analysis of the entire hagiographical corpus of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, which aims to complement classical philological and historical approaches. After

¹ Information on the project 'HAGIOGRAPHIES. Sociologie et histoire de la littérature hagiographique en Occident des origines à 1550' can be found at <http://www.fundp.ac.be/philo_lettres/histoire/h221.htm>, accessed 30 Mar. 2011.

discussing some problems of the database structure, Philippart and Trigalet present several questions that derive from the collected data. They point out functional differences between texts in Gaul and Italy, trace the ecclesiastical attitude towards passions of the martyrs, observe peculiarities in Latin translations from Greek, and examine centres of *réécriture* before the ninth century. Arnold Angenendt, in his '*Donationes pro anima: Gift and Countergift in the Early Medieval Liturgy*', delineates the history of sacrifices and (mostly monastic) countergifts from the fifth to the twelfth century, thus extending the 'long morning' of Medieval Europe into 'midday'. Angenendt provides a fine overview of earlier research, including his own, but there are not many 'new directions' in his contribution, and consequently Thomas Head struggles to find some in his summary of this part, 'The Early Medieval Transformation of Piety'. Head also criticizes 'the relative lack of attention to Anglophone scholarship' in both contributions.

Part III is concerned with Latin literature, or rather 'Representation and Reality in the Artistry of Early Medieval Literature'. Paul Edward Dutton makes some 'Observations on Early Medieval Weather in General, Bloody Rain in Particular', the latter often interpreted as a manifestation of 'divine displeasure'. In the twelfth century, Dutton notices a clear shift towards a more observational attitude to nature and an effort to explain these phenomena in an elemental or physical way. Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, in 'The King Says No: On the Logic of Type-Scenes in Late Antique and Early Medieval Narrative', sees the stereotypical form of narrative literature in a more positive light than previous scholars did. He is especially interested in the modification of type-scenes and what this can tell us about the times in which a given work was written. Pizarro concludes that 'type-scenes and other narrative formulas constitute priceless documents of the political and historical imagination, and thus a crucial chapter in the history of mentalities'. Jan M. Ziolkowski, 'Of Arms and the (Ger)man: Literary and Material Culture in the *Waltharius*', focuses on descriptions of weaponry that depart from the literary sources of the *Waltharius*. Danuta Shanzer, 'Representations and Reality in Early Medieval Literature', presents some helpful reflections, complementing Dutton's contribution with a convenient formula: 'While climate is objective, "weather" is subjective.' She adds, for consideration, that there are more than twenty

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words for 'red' in Latin, all of them with different meanings. Shanzer also expresses reservations about Pizarro's article because there is no established corpus of 'type-scenes', as there is one of 'topoi'.

Part IV considers 'Practices of Power in an Early Medieval Empire'. Janet L. Nelson, 'Charlemagne and Empire', asks how Charlemagne could assert his regime down to the lower ranks of society. She looks mainly at the 'Mainz hostage list' dating from c.805, which she also presents in English translation. Jennifer R. Davis, 'A Pattern for Power: Charlemagne's Delegation of Judicial Responsibilities', seeks to find 'recurrent patterns' that can expose the principles behind Charlemagne's rulership. She concludes that the functions of 'judicial officials' (counts, bishops, and *missi*) found in royal legislation overlapped. Davis considers this as neither accidental nor a manifestation of incompetence, but rather 'a clever way of delegating power while still maintaining overall royal control'. Matthew J. Innes, in 'Practices of Property in the Carolingian Empire', reminds us that 'absolute property' and 'exclusive ownership' are products of the nineteenth century and should not be seen as 'historical constants'. By examining four symptomatic cases ('postcards') from the ninth century, he defines 'Carolingian property law . . . as being a matter of loose, supposedly common-sensical, notions of ownership'. In his concluding article, 'The Cunning of Institutions', Stuart Airlie calls attention to the danger of understanding the term 'Carolingian' as too homogeneous or monolithic. This can be allayed by means of comparative studies, or by taking a longer chronological perspective, into the tenth and eleventh centuries, in order to define the characteristics of the Carolingian period more precisely.

The last part covers 'The Intellectuality of Early Medieval Art'. Beginning with Notker Balbulus' description of Charlemagne's palace at Aachen (which Notker had not seen), Mayke de Jong examines the term *solarium* and its meaning in texts of the ninth century. Her study, 'Charlemagne's Balcony: The *Solarium* in Ninth-Century Narratives', is architectural, linguistic, and literary history at the same time, and thus interdisciplinary in the true sense of the word. She concludes that *solarium* was not just a term denoting a piece of architecture, but was 'heavily invested with meaning': 'the essence of a *solarium* was its altitude, both physically and socially.' Herbert L. Kessler looks at 'Image and Object: Christ's Dual Nature and the Crisis of Early Medieval Art' and shows that artwork was meaning-

ful in terms not only of iconography, what we see, but also of the material used to make it. The iconography could, for example, represent the human Christ, the material (gold, for instance) his divinity. In his summary, Thomas F. X. Noble presents 'Matter and Meaning in the Carolingian World'. He adds a few examples to de Jong's definition of *solarium* and makes commonplace remarks such as: 'Buildings talk, and they speak known languages.' Finally, he doubts whether there was a crisis at the end of the eighth century, as Kessler argues.

All in all, this volume, with its intertwined presentation accompanied by Michael McCormick's introductions which provide additional cross-connections between the five parts of the volume, is an excellent example of fruitful discussion among scholars of different fields. The broad approach in topics and the long period covered are fascinating, but although not every aspect can be covered in one volume for obvious reasons, the geographical focus on central Europe, and especially on the Carolingian realm, impairs the overall impression. Some of the contributors—especially McCormick, Philippart and Trigalet, and Dutton—use new methodologies and thus open up the 'new directions' addressed by the editors in their introduction, where they state that '[n]ew tools and methods . . . open new possibilities for discovering the early medieval past'. Most of the authors, however, rely on 'old skills', primarily detailed textual analysis. Yet a recurring aspect throughout the book is that the authors reflect upon their methods and elaborate on the way of developing their results. By this means, even the more well-trodden paths of research on early medieval history presented in this volume often lead to exciting outcomes and inspiring impulses.

DOMINIK WASSENHOVEN is *Wissenschaftlicher Assistent* at the Chair of Medieval History, University of Bayreuth. He is working on a project comparing Anglo-Saxon and Ottonian-Salian bishops and their actions in contested succession crises. His dissertation on Scandinavians travelling in Europe, a study on mobility and cultural exchange including a prosopography of Scandinavians abroad, has been published as *Skandinavier unterwegs in Europa (1000–1250): Mobilität und Kulturtransfer auf prosopographischer Grundlage* (2006).