

arthritis continued to intensify so much that, by 1624, he could barely write and the management of the state had been largely taken over by Buckingham, who remained a crucial Jacobean figure, right through until the king's death in March of 1625.

The final two chapters discuss James's writing more directly in relation to the formation of a united Great Britain once on the English throne; the rise of Ecumenism and Armenianism and the handling of witchcraft and Catholicism. Yet, despite the addition of this textual material, this study should be regarded overall as a helpful introduction to Jacobean studies for students, rather than a rigorous scholarly contribution to the history of early modern England.

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Cubitt, Catherine, ed., *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages: the Proceedings of the First Alcuin Conference* (Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 3), Turnhout, Brepols, 2003; hardback; pp. xiv, 290, 47 b/w illustrations; RRP €75; ISBN 2503511643.

Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages is the third in a very welcome series focusing on Western Europe in the early medieval period produced by Brepols under the auspices of the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York. This volume contains six papers on Carolingian courts, three on Anglo-Saxon courts, one on papal courts, and two on Byzantine courts. It is unsurprising that the Carolingian aspect is over-represented, since the book is the proceedings of the Alcuin conference. Catherine Cubitt's 'Introduction' competently reviews the development and current state of scholarship about court culture, providing a useful background against which to read the following papers.

Donald A. Bullough's paper 'Unsettled at Aachen: Alcuin between Frankfurt and Tours' reviews what is known of Alcuin's life and writings to shed interesting light on Alcuin's position and attitudes in relation to his native England and the court of Charlemagne. In 'Was Charlemagne's Court a Courtly Society?' Janet L. Nelson assesses what is known of the Carolingian court against three major indicators: existence in space, identifiable culture, and enhancement of royal authority, to answer her question in the affirmative.

Matthew Innes ('"A Place of Discipline": Carolingian Courts and Aristocratic Youth') examines the central role of the Carolingian court in the development of

young men of aristocratic birth. This role, he stresses, was one of example and discipline, rather than formal instruction. This paper is marred by occasional grammatical errors which should have been eliminated by proofreading (e.g. pp. 67, 73).

In 'Mathematics at Charlemagne's Court and Its Transmission', Paul L. Butzer and Karl W. Butzer bring scientific approaches to the study of court culture. Claims that 'a few gifted and reflective individuals' were able to 'work effectively even in out-of-the-way places' and 'liturgical planning in advance' was required 'to inform small or distant Christian communities' suggest that the Butzers' understanding of the transmission of scholarship and the organisation of ecclesiastical communities diverges from that of the majority of early medieval scholars. Nonetheless, their survey of works on computus, geometry and arithmetic is useful and informative.

Lawrence Nees reviews 'The Illustrated Manuscript of the *Visio Baronti*', considering the range of possible readings of the illustrations, which 'do not necessarily tell the same story' as the text. Although he is unwilling to imagine 'that the designer of the illustrations was a post-modernist before his time who revelled in slippery signifiers for their own sake', it seems clear that the designer did intend the signifiers to be slippery; the word multivalent comes to mind.

The physical setting of the Carolingian court is examined by Uwe Lobbedey in 'Carolingian Royal Palaces: The State of Research from an Architectural Historian's Viewpoint'. Lobbedey points out that 'we know even less than we thought some years ago', and gives a clear and insightful overview of what we do know, illustrated by useful plans and photographs.

James Campbell painstakingly assembles the meagre evidence for the physical world of the Anglo-Saxon court, and ends in 'desperation' by looking to Carolingian and Norwegian sources for supplementation. In 'Wrestling with Hercules: King Alfred and the Classical Past', Susan Irvine advances the interesting and quite convincing argument that Alfred adopted and adapted the figure of Hercules as a model of the 'Christian morality' and 'intellectual vitality' to which Alfred was so dedicated.

David Pratt's 'Persuasion and Invention at the Court of King Alfred the Great' is similarly convincing in its argument that the surviving Alfred Jewel (which he considers to be an *aestel*) and three comparable fittings, the reported candle-lantern of Alfred's invention, and the Fuller Brooch reflect Alfred's preoccupation with learning and wisdom. He thus neatly contextualises three objects which have generated much debate over a number of years.

'Papal Court Culture during the Pontificate of Zacharias' by John Osborne concludes that this pope's court in the mid-eighth century was expanding into political and cultural territory that had previously been reserved for royal courts. In 'Beyond the *De Ceremoniis*', Rosemary Norris collects evidence from a range of texts that presents Byzantine court officials in roles very like modern event managers but on a much grander scale. Lyn Rodley ('The Byzantine Court and Byzantine Art') concludes the volume with a study comparing textual and graphic depictions of the trappings of the court, including a particularly interesting discussion of the development of the garment known as a *loros* from a wrapped stole to a fitted garment.

A very attractive aspect of this book is the combination of documentary and material evidence, and of approaches encompassing the mathematical, architectural, archaeological, art-historical, historical and literary. *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages* is a useful way for a scholar in a related field to gain a grasp of what is known of aristocratic courts in the early medieval period. It is probably even more useful as a resource to be dipped into for answers to specific questions, and this function is ably supported by an excellent index.

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Datta, Satya, *Women and Men in Early Modern Venice: Reassessing History*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003; hardback; pp. vii, 272; 1 b&w illustration; RRP £45; ISBN 0754633470.

This careful and meticulous book is written in a personalised style, giving it an accessibility which the considerable methodological analysis would otherwise have made very weighty. Nevertheless, the continuous side-tracking down avenues of complex methodology can render the reader somewhat confused, losing sight of the women and men in early modern Venice who are the subject of the book. The long introductory chapter is a reflection on the nature of historical discourse with theoretical considerations which encompass epistemological considerations, descriptive gender studies, the Scott-Tilly-Varikas controversy on gender/experience/discursive reality, and the determination of meaning and experience through intellectual history after 'the linguistic turn'. By this is meant that intellectual history's major concern should be the semiological orientation