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## Review: Wasperton: A Roman, British and Anglo-Saxon Community in Central England, Martin Carver, ed.

Bailey K. Young

*Eastern Illinois University*, [bkyoung@eiu.edu](mailto:bkyoung@eiu.edu)

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to Isabella, and unlike Beves's mother, who "enacts a Scottish refusal to acknowledge or accept English sovereignty" (p. 95), Josiane helps affirm Beves's royal power and English identity.

*Pe King of Tars* is the focus of the third chapter, "Monstrous Intermingling and Miraculous Conversion," which "describes the monstrous progeny" of a "marriage between an unconverted Saracen king and a Christian princess" (p. 98). Calkin understands this monstrosity as "articulat[ing] anxieties about cultural integration" (p. 98) between the English and their neighbors, the Welsh, the Scots, and the French, as repeated military campaigns in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries led to a heightened awareness of the enemies on the English borders and a concomitant push to assimilate them. In *Pe King of Tars* the proper end to interfaith or intergroup conflict is full submission; upon Christian baptism, the misbegotten lump of flesh takes on human form. The sultan's own baptism, after he witnesses the miraculous transformation of his son, causes his black skin to become white: ocular proof of the power of Christian faith and the triumph of the same.

In chapter 4, "Saracens and English Christian Identity in *Seynt Katerine* and *Seynt Mergrete*," the martyrdom of two female saints in the imperial past calls to mind religious, political, and geographic strife in the crusading present, thus introducing "contemporary historical resonances of eastern power, of western defeats at eastern hands, and of western political expulsion from the Holy Land" (p. 135). In these texts and their analogues, monstrosity is not a result of miscegenation but inherent in the other. As in *Pe King of Tars*, fundamental difference is expressed in skin color. Demonic, black Saracen men are not only "supernatural, hellish persecutors of Christians" but also "human, earthly persecutors of Christians" (p. 152), contemporary English crusaders among them.

The final chapter, "Saracens, Englishness, and Productive Violence in *Of Arthour and of Merlin*," shows how the poem rewrites Arthur's Saxon foes as Saracens, partners with the English in a seemingly never-ending foreign war. Although gruesome, indecisive, destructive, and bloody, the war nevertheless forges young warriors into the fellowship of Arthur's court, unites the people of London and the rural population, and reestablishes English hegemony over Wales, Scotland, Northumbria, and Cornwall. Calkin links these positive effects to the well-known justification of writing in English with which the poem begins. The "proudly vernacular prologue" (p. 204) partakes of the "productive violence" of the rest of the poem: just as the English language overtakes the French imposed by conquest, so, too, the English hero Arthur overtakes (or at least equals) the French champion Charlemagne; so, too, will the Saracens be vanquished in some happy future as were the Saxons in the glorious past.

The texts explored in *Saracens and the Making of English Identity* have particular relevance in a time of our own bloody and seemingly never-ending war against enemies so like those in Auchinleck: different and yet the same. But even when, one day, the present conflict is over, this book will continue to speak to perennially urgent concerns about the construction of identity and the use of others in service of that construction. For that, and for her persuasive reading of the Auchinleck Manuscript, we should thank Siobhan Bly Calkin.

SYLVIA TOMASCH, Macaulay Honors College, City University of New York

MARTIN CARVER, ed., *Wasperton: A Roman, British and Anglo-Saxon Community in Central England*. (Anglo-Saxon Studies, 11.) Woodbridge, Eng., and Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer, 2009. Pp. x, 372 plus 2 color plates and plan on endpapers; many black-and-white figures and tables. \$115.

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It begins as a story common enough in archaeological circles: development (in this case gravel mining) uncovers a cemetery excavated under hasty (even heroic) rescue conditions (here by the Warwickshire Museum and Birmingham University's Field Archaeology Unit,

or BUFAU, from 1980 to 1985). Lack of funding then stymies postexcavation work and publication. But not for long. Martin Carver, BUFAU's director at the time of excavation (but not the excavator) and subsequently professor of medieval archaeology at York, undertook in 1990 responsibility for the publication project. Progress with the catalogue and artifact study was made through graduate dissertations (notably that of Jonathan Scheschkewitz of Kiel University, which Carver codirected with Michael Müller-Wille) and a grant from English Heritage, allowing him to work with Catherine Hills of Cambridge. Scheschkewitz and Hills, with Carver, are the three principal contributors to this publication. But, as the acknowledgments makes clear, Martin Carver coordinated the entire project, integrating the specialist reports of the seventeen contributors listed on the title page, and wrote the text himself.

*Wasperton* offers both somewhat less and rather more than the traditional site report. Well over half the volume is devoted to the catalogue of inhumations and cremations, that is, to presenting the basic data for contemporary and future specialists. British archaeologists have set high standards in this regard, fully met here. Each grave is carefully described and illustrated by a line drawing in plan, and often in profile as well. The drawings of artifacts from the graves—whether a brooch with an intricate design or a bent iron hobnail—are of uniformly high quality. Specialists will search in vain, however, for a detailed comparative analysis of each object in the grave assemblage, where chronology and typology are thrashed out in a discussion of parallels from other sites, most of them on the Continent. We may find this discussion, Carver assures us, in Jonathan Scheschkewitz's published German thesis (2006), which proposes a date range for each object and also for each burial assemblage, with the latter organized into six phases ranging from late Roman to early seventh century. *Wasperton*, chapter 4, devoted to the provenance and chronology of the grave assemblages, adopts Scheschkewitz's phases and summarizes his findings for the object types but reconsiders the dating of when the assemblage came together (that is, the moment of burial) in the light of other factors, notably radiocarbon dates of bone, orientation and alignment of graves, stratigraphy (intercutting of graves), and body position. Carver's argument that the "heirloom effect" (placing antique items in a grave assemblage) can seriously distort understanding the chronology and character of a cemetery challenges the way dating is often done ("seriation of assemblages . . . may be misleading as a method of ordering graves," p. 121), and his proposal that this distortion can be mitigated by integrating other kinds of sequencing data in the model he proposes here deserves serious consideration from archaeologists. They must also weigh the plausibility of the overall interpretative model as developed in chapter 5: that *Wasperton* was a mixed-rite cemetery (216 inhumations and 26 cremations) used continuously, over three centuries, by a mixed population whose development is fossilized into thirteen "spatial groups" corresponding to family/kinship subgroups within the larger community, itself evolving or, perhaps one should say, rolling with the historical punches.

The burden of chapter 6, "Wasperton in Context," is to build a portrait of that community, somewhat in the manner of forensic artists who on the basis of bones sketch in a face; the archaeological "facts" deduced in the previous chapters here serve as the "bones." Ironically, here the literal bones are of little use, so poor is their preservation: only 54 of the inhumations provided enough material for analysis; not only were there no complete skeletons, but only in one case did more than 25 percent of the bone survive. How frustrating for paleodemographers! It is some compensation, however, that stable isotope analysis could establish for a score of individuals that a majority (13) were raised locally, with significant minorities of Mediterranean or west British background (table 4.2). Fifteen radiocarbon dates regarding both cremations and inhumations also help underpin the chronological reasoning, independently of the artifact assemblages, and confirm that both rites were used concurrently and in different phases. Other good news: the cemetery, and ten hectares of the prehistoric landscape into which it was inserted, was completely (and reliably and attentively) excavated, yielding a

significant series of graves with artifacts (108 inhumations and virtually all the cremations), as well as an important sequence of unfurnished burials. Pulling all the various elements together, Carver proposes that sometime in the fourth century Romano-British wheat farmers established a cemetery with four distinct family burial areas within an abandoned agricultural enclosure. They may have been influenced by the proximity of older (Neolithic, Bronze Age) monuments. In the late fifth century, “culturally Anglo-Saxon” cremation burials were inserted into the western part of the enclosure, where inhumation also continued (as elsewhere). In the course of the sixth century and into the early seventh, burial went on within the enclosure while new areas developed outside it, including a few monumentalized by mounds. The material culture is now dominantly Anglo-Saxon, but this should not be taken to prove, as often used to be assumed, that ethnic Anglo-Saxons had taken over. Over the past generation controversy has arisen in regard to all the old interpretative paradigms that emphasize grand historical process—“fall” of Roman Britain, Anglo-Saxon “invasions” (or migrations or elite replacement), British resistance (or genocide or assimilation), the role of paganism and/or Christianity as reflected (or not) in funerary archaeology. Carver boldly proposes stepping back from perspectives of vast disruption to insist, instead, on the continuity of local identity while adapting to change. People at Wasperdon in A.D. 350, when burial began, lived in a familiar landscape with ritual features that extended far back in time, on a politico-cultural-economic margin in place at least since the pre-Roman Iron Age. They could adapt to new circumstances, incorporating some new people, whether from the Roman south, the British west, or the Anglo-Saxon east; they might adopt new forms of symbolic language (Anglo-Saxon-style grave assemblages) and reinvent older ones (barrows), all within the context of an ongoing identity for which we have no name. They would be an example of the resilience of traditional rural communities. Local identity, Julia Smith suggests in her excellent overview, *Europe after Rome* (2007), is the key to understanding early-medieval Europe. Martin Carver and his colleagues have provided what is to this reviewer a persuasive example of how archaeological evidence can be read in this light.

BAILEY K. YOUNG, Eastern Illinois University

EMMA CAYLEY and ASHBY KINCH, eds., *Chartier in Europe*. (Gallica, 11.) Woodbridge, Eng., and Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer, 2008. Pp. xii, 213. \$95.  
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This volume represents the first essay collection devoted to Alain Chartier, and it has the particularity of stressing the late-medieval author’s influence throughout Europe as both a courtly poet and a political writer. Having penned a diverse corpus of vernacular and Latin writings in poetry and prose treating courtly, didactic, and political issues, Chartier enjoyed a sustained and expansive popularity well into the sixteenth century. His fame is documented by the astounding extant material that James Laidlaw, who provides a foreword to the collection, listed in his 1974 edition of Chartier’s poetical works as entailing around 250 manuscripts and twenty-five early print editions. Meanwhile, as the contributors detail, Chartier influenced not only French literature but European culture at large, as is evidenced by translations of his selected works into Middle English, Scots, Castilian, and Italian.

The collection benefits from a mixture of new voices and established scholars from French, British, and American institutions that reflect the renewed energy surrounding Chartier studies. A thoughtful introduction situates Chartier in his historical context and relates the contributions both to earlier Chartier scholarship and to relevant theoretical studies, especially as regards translation theory. Organized into three sections, the eleven contributions move from treatment of literary influences on Chartier to the circulation of his works, both in their original form and in translation. In part 1, “Authorising Chartier,” Douglas Kelly examines Chartier’s rewriting