

transmitted to eastern Europe enabling a better understanding of the complexity of 'barbarian' society in this dynamic phase of European history.

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**Glauser, Jürg, Hermann, Pernille, and Mitchell, Stephen A. (eds), *Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches*** (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018) hardcover, 2 vols, xxiv + 1163 pages, RRP € 229.00; ISBN 9783110440201

Though memory studies emerged as an important theoretical approach to the humanities through the 1990s, its use in medieval studies and, by extension, medieval Nordic studies, has been a more recent phenomenon. The past decade, however, has seen scholars of the pre-modern Scandinavian past adopt memory theory—cultural memory theory in particular—and rapidly adapt it to the field. Foremost among these scholars, and leading the work being done in this area, are the three editors of the present volume. Yet the rapid growth of Nordic memory studies and the frequency of new publications have made it difficult to keep up with research innovations, develop standard terminology, identify the present boundaries of knowledge, and pinpoint fruitful areas for further research. Here is where the value of this monumental resource lies. It is a chance for memory researchers in Nordic studies to pause and take stock, an opportunity to survey the field, to coordinate, and collaborate. In short, this book is a snapshot of pre-modern Nordic memory studies *at this time*, and in this is an extraordinary undertaking, both visionary and invaluable. Here I can but echo the words of Guðrún Nordal in the volume's foreword: "It is immensely helpful to put together such a wide-ranging handbook at this juncture, at a time when so much is still left to be done" (p. xv).

Granted that this volume(s) extends to some 100-odd contributions across its near-1,200 pages, I will largely limit myself to some general comments regarding the book as a whole. Which said, given that this review is for *JAEMA*, I shall make especial note of the contributions of Australian scholars.

*Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies* is comprised of two volumes: a large volume of 940 pages containing the individual analyses of a wide range of contributors, and a slim second volume containing a curated selection of primary sources demonstrating perceptions of memory in pre-modern Scandinavia. Volume 1 in turn is divided into two thematic sections. The first of these, made up of thirty chapters, focuses on disciplinary approaches to, and perspectives of, memory studies. These contributions follow a formula, providing a definition of the discipline and its intersection with memory studies, an overview of current scholarship, a short study demonstrating how memory studies can be applied to the field, a discussion of future directions, and a bibliography. Disciplines covered include rhetoric and literary studies (Jürg Glauser), mythology (Pernille Hermann), archaeology (Anders Andrén), folklore and orality (Stephen A. Mitchell), law (Stefan Brink), and history (Bjørn Bandlien). There are, in this first section, two contributions by scholars at Australian universities:

Margaret Clunies Ross (University of Sydney/University of Adelaide) and Antonina Harbus (Macquarie University).

Clunies Ross, a ubiquitous name in Old Norse studies, lends her expertise to a discussion of memory in reception studies. She argues that reception studies and memory studies are uniquely compatible, with both fields interested in the perpetuation and dissemination of a culture or society's knowledge and experience. Clunies Ross perceives Icelandic literature, in its intent to record the Scandinavian past, in its concern to conserve pre-literate culture in the integration of poetry in prose, as particularly suited to memory and reception studies. Harbus' short contribution summarises the state of memory research within the study of early medieval England ('Anglo-Saxon studies'). Harbus highlights that memory and memorialisation appears to have been an overt concern for the early English as much as can be told from texts like Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and Old English elegies. As such, the study of memory has been an important approach to these texts for decades and, she proposes, likely to continue to be so in the coming years, with a particular emphasis on cognitive approaches to memory.

The second section of volume 1 is devoted to case studies and comprised of seventy chapters, many of them quite short. According to the editors, this section is intended to compliment and expand on the studies presented in part one (p. 23). Each chapter is a self-contained two-part examination: a specific theme is identified and introduced, then explored in a source-focused case study. Of particular interest in the context of my own research are chapters by Gísli Sigurðsson on the literary adaptations of orality in a society transitioning to literacy, by Vésteinn Ólason on the function of memory in *Íslendingasögur*, and by Russell Poole on the role skalds and skaldic verse played in the transmission of cultural memory. There is one Australian contribution here from Lisa Bennett (Flinders University). Bennett's is one of few chapters to approach memory through the lens of the *lieux de mémoire*—Pierre Nora's theory of mnemonic space. Where contributors do explicitly engage with theory, it is most frequently with the models of collective or cultural memory proposed by Maurice Halbwachs, Jan Assmann, or Aleida Assmann. As *lieux de mémoire*, Bennett focuses on burial mounds depicted in *Íslendingasögur*, considering not only their mnemonic role in the landscape as both memorialising and commemorative, but later cultural attitudes apparent in their representations by the saga authors.

Volume 2 (or part 3) then provides examples of memory functioning within pre-modern Nordic sources. These range from excerpts from *Íslendingasögur* and histories such as *Gesta Danorum* and *Heimskringla*, through to transcriptions and translations of runic inscriptions. These are then complimented by twenty pages of colour plates depicting mnemonic landscapes, artefacts, rune stones, manuscripts, and statuary. There is also here a short supplemental bibliography, and a reasonably comprehensive index (there is no index in volume 1, and one presumes the books are sold as a pair).

The editors must be commended for conceiving of this enormous project and bringing it to fruition. It is sure to prove an important reference text for not only scholars of the pre-modern Nordic past, but to medievalists and memory studies researchers more widely. *Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies* masterfully

demonstrates the breadth of memory studies being undertaken in our field, opening new avenues for enquiry and collaboration.

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**Mees, Kate, *Burial, Landscape and Identity in Early Medieval Wessex***  
 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2019) hardcover, 324 pages, RRP £60; ISBN 9781783274178

This volume is one of the latest offerings in the Anglo-Saxon Studies series by Boydell edited by John Hines and Catherine Cubitt. This monograph is the product of Mees' doctoral thesis undertaken at University of Exeter in 2010–2013. This is a detailed and thoughtful book which explores perceptions of prehistory, ritual, religion, and identity from the fifth to the ninth centuries using a landscape archaeology approach to early medieval Wessex. This work is tightly focused on the region of Wessex (defined by Mees as the modern English counties of Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, and Hampshire), which is its biggest strength and weakness. The inclusion of a chapter or section framing the techniques and implications of this work in the broader context of early Medieval England and Europe would have made it of interest to more scholars. However, the close regional study allows Mees to analyse the archaeology at a level rarely seen in other works of this kind.

Mees begins by outlining through monument reuse in the fifth to seventh centuries (primarily barrows), how ritual landscapes are formed, reformed, perceived, and performed in Wessex, and produces some fascinating insights into the sacred topographies of study area. More could have been done in the first chapter to explain and explore this multi-scalar and multidisciplinary approach, and as such a link or digital download of the shape files, databases, and other digital files necessary to reproduce the fantastic maps that fill this book would have been a very valuable addition. Nevertheless Mees' integration of the toponymic and documentary sources with the funerary archaeology and GIS technologies should be applauded.

A stroke of Mees' brilliance is the use of microtopography, a novel approach that yields some intriguing inferences about the interplay between landscape and funerary ritual. However, her case for the utility of this method would have been strengthened by the incorporation of a case study from outside of Wessex to demonstrate its efficacy for our time period, beyond one particularly well studied region with good archaeological preservation and outstanding prehistoric monuments.

The lack of statistical analyses and raw data makes it hard to assess many of the claims being made about the trends and correlations between funerary archaeology and certain landscape features. Though percentages are often cited, and kernel density calculations (e.g. of excavation bias in Hampshire) have been undertaken, as shown by maps with overlays, these cannot be validated without raw data and details of their statistical methodology. While this omission might be due to the low sample sizes for many of the objects and phenomena described, which can be prohibitive to some forms of analysis but not all (e.g. Bayesian frameworks), the author should have been more explicit about these analytical choices.