

(even when performed through digital media). What I call the feeling *of and for* clay (Malafouris, 2014) is very much alive now as it was in the Bronze Age, not in the forms of the vessels produced or in the functions that they serve, rather in the process of creative material engagement by which the potter's body meets the plasticity of clay. No doubt bodies are different, minds are different, clays are different, and settings are different, and yet their creative entanglement renders them comparable. Overall, this is an important book, timely, erudite, and conceptually pleasing, that anyone with an interest in the creative potential of clay should read.

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Howard Williams, Joanne Kirton and Meggen Gondek, eds. *Early Medieval Stone Monuments: Materiality, Biography, Landscape* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015, 293pp, 89 b/w figs, hbk, ISBN 978-1-78327-074-3)

In the long history of archaeological scholarship on early medieval stone sculpture, it might be said that we have progressed through three phases. The first phase grew out of antiquarian and art historical approaches, and concentrated on cataloguing particular types of sculpture, although not always systematically. Elaborate and unusual examples were highlighted, and interpretations focused on unpicking what obscure figural scenes or symbols were attempting to

represent through reference to Biblical or mythological narratives. This stage was followed by the first truly distinctive archaeological approach, which undertook comprehensive surveys focused on classifying styles, types, and ornaments, and which for the first time often included every small fragment as well as complete pieces, and poorly executed, plain, and 'uninteresting' stones alongside the fine, ornate, and exotic ones. These surveys also delineated basic patterns

of distribution and chronology, and occasionally also geology and stone sources, and set the stones within their historical and cultural contexts. This second phase is exemplified best in the work of the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* volumes (Cramp, 1984–2013), which record the seventh to eleventh-century sculpture of England by region, and by equivalent work on Welsh, Pictish, and Scandinavian stones (e.g. Nylén & Lamm, 1988; Fraser and Ritchie, 1999; RCAHMW, 2007–2013). These surveys have provided the essential groundwork without which we could not have progressed into the third phase in which we currently find ourselves—and the one which the volume under review here seeks to move even further beyond.

As the painstaking work of cataloguing, classifying, and dating early medieval sculpture has for the most part been accomplished, the subject has enjoyed, since the late 1990s and 2000s, a long period of research focused on socially and spatially contextualized interpretation of the significance of these monuments (e.g. Sidebottom, 2000; Stocker & Everson, 2001). Nevertheless, the second phase of research continues along beside it, and still accounts for much literature on early medieval sculpture. The chief aim of *Early Medieval Stone Monuments* is to shake up this current state of research, which has now been solidly in place for nearly two decades, and some elements of it for much longer. The volume argues forcefully and convincingly for the absolute necessity of theoretically informed, socially contextualized approaches to monumental sculpture, and chooses a more specific focus on the themes of materiality, landscape, and biography. The driving theme is monuments as ‘memory work’, defined by the editors as ‘material strategies by which selective remembering was orchestrated and mediated not simply by the raising of carved stone monuments, but by their use,

reuse, translation, reconfiguration, and even destruction’ (p. 1). While adopting a biographical approach to monuments or considering their ‘afterlives’ beyond their initial erection is not new, as the authors acknowledge, what is novel here is the consistent focus throughout on how monuments enabled the practical and performative creation of both individual and collective memories.

As part of their attempt to overhaul current research directions in stone sculpture, the editors have stated a bold ambition to not only go beyond considerations of style, but to move beyond a focus on ‘date, distribution, iconography, meaning, and context’ as well (p. 24). I am in sympathy with the core motivation behind this statement, as research on monumental sculpture is still frequently characterized by functionalist studies of chronology and production, and interpretations of iconography which ignore questions of why and how stylistic or iconographic choices were made, and the social significance of these choices. However, when the contributions to the volume are judged against that statement, I think it may in the end be slightly too bold, trying too hard to be polemic. I would contend that it is not necessary, or maybe even possible, to leave all of these things to one side in order to engage with the admirable theoretical approaches espoused here—the studies included in the volume certainly do not. This statement of purpose might thus have more clearly articulated what seems to be the primary thrust of the volume, which is that if discussions of date, distribution, iconography, meaning, and context are to be considered (and they frequently must), then we should not be content to end there. They can instead be utilized as tools to explore the ‘new trajectories of theory’ (p. 24) which the authors have chosen to focus on—namely, how monuments generated social memory through their materiality, biographies, and

their interaction with the landscapes in which they were erected.

For early medieval monuments, scholarship has indeed reached the point where it can usefully move into this 'fourth phase' of research, and as such, the volume is to be highly commended for taking this step. However, the statement of direction might have more generously recognized that a statement labelling date, distribution, iconography, and context as somewhat *passé* can only be made when the fundamentals of recording and the general character of production, distribution, style, and chronology are well understood. The extensive, comprehensive catalogues and thorough probings of spatial and chronological patterning which are available for early medieval monuments mean that this necessary groundwork has often already been performed by others. This is a luxury that has not been afforded to many classes of artefact or monument, and should not be taken for granted, as they are the shoulders upon which volumes like these must stand. It behoves us as scholars to acknowledge that this ostensibly less exciting work has to be done to allow us to responsibly range into more complex theoretical approaches, if they are to be grounded in a solid base of evidence.

Notwithstanding this mild critique, the volume is an engaging, well researched, innovative, and important piece of work. The editors' introduction offers a thorough historiography of research on early medieval monuments, and the aims are clearly articulated and cogently argued. The central themes of materiality, landscape, and biography are well explained from the start, and they run consistently throughout the individual papers, resulting in an admirably cohesive volume despite the wide range of chronology and geography covered. The volume and editors are to be particularly commended for the fact that all of the papers follow through on the

ambitious theoretical approaches promised in the introduction, which is far from common in similar volumes. All of the chapters address the monuments as tools and creators and arbiters of memory, and focus on at least one of the themes of biography, materiality, or memory, and often more than one. While each paper engages to varying extents with theoretical perspectives, it is almost always articulated clearly, without overuse of jargon, and each paper offers plenty of grounding in evidence and case studies, clearly linking the espoused theories with their 'real world' manifestations in stone.

The volume consists of a general introduction and eight further articles, and the editors should be commended for featuring the work of three early career scholars alongside established academics, as they have made equivalently significant contributions which deserve wide dissemination. A particular strength of the book is its wide geographical coverage, including two papers on Irish material (Clíodhna O'Leary; Jenifer Ni Ghraidaigh), two on Scotland (Meggen Gondek; Mark A. Hall), one on Sweden (Ing-Marie Back Danielsson), one on Norway (Iris Crouwers), and two on England (Joanne Kirton, Howard Williams). As English early medieval sculpture has been the best covered elsewhere, and has been most subjected to theorized approaches previously, it is useful that the editors have made such a concerted effort to bring in an array of international examples. Although they note that the 'strength of this collection is in its themes, not its geographical foci' (p. 24), the value of the volume, in allowing the reader to discover cross-cultural similarities in how and why stone monuments were deployed in the landscape and as memory-generators, should not be underestimated, given that these sculptural traditions have almost always been treated separately because of their iconographic

and formal disparities and geographical contexts.

Also very valuable is the consideration of the use and meaning of early medieval monuments, not just in the chronological context in which they were originally erected or in the modern day (i.e. the 'past in the present' approach undertaken most often by heritage and community-focused archaeology). Rather, the contributions consider these contexts, as well as how monuments were conceived of by later medieval and early modern societies. These societies' relationships to the monuments are particularly interesting as they did not erect the monument themselves, and may not have 'understood' its origins in the modern academic sense, but they nevertheless utilized the monuments as a tool in myth-making and memory-generation, in order to create coherent narratives about their communities' pasts and presents.

Of the volume's three stated themes, landscape makes the most consistent appearance, featuring in almost every paper. Overall, the book does an excellent job considering the relationship of monuments to both natural and cultural landscapes, and how these are often closely intertwined when considering the placement of monuments, and the meanings they held for patrons, audiences, and communities. It also demonstrates an understanding of analysing landscape on different scales, thinking about both a monument's immediate surroundings, as well as its location and role in much wider physical and social environments. Materiality and biography are less universally considered, but the unique insight which can be provided by a biographical approach gets particularly good treatment in Mark Hall's exploration of the lives of early medieval Scottish sculpture, in which they are reimagined by different societies over time, and invested with different, but equally significant, meanings over their lifetimes. Nowhere is it better demonstrated

that early medieval sculpture does not just matter in the early Middle Ages—these are monuments with meaningful life stories persisting up until the present day.

On the whole, *Early Medieval Stone Monuments* is an important volume which clearly and consistently delivers on its ambitious aims, and which offers a variety of perspectives and detailed case studies covering a wide range of early medieval monuments throughout Britain, Ireland, and Scandinavia. It is very readable, and both academics and students will find it valuable as a cover-to-cover read or for dipping into, depending on their research needs. At £60 sterling, the volume is priced as you would expect for a hardbound book with a primarily academic audience, and while that price will put it out of reach for most students to buy themselves, the introduction and many of the individual papers can nevertheless be useful as key reference points in teaching.

The book is generally edited very well, although unfortunately a number of typographical errors have slipped through in the final chapter. The volume is well presented in an attractive hardbound format, and the black and white drawings and photos show off the sculpture to good effect. Although black and white photography is particularly useful for highlighting texture and ornamental detailing, the lack of colour images in the volume means that we miss out on things such as the vibrancy of the red paint against granite on Scandinavian runestones, or the variety of colours of stone that would have been an essential characteristic of all early medieval monuments, and a key component of their impact in the landscape. Given the significance of colour as a key element of the materiality of stone, and the centrality of materiality to this volume, it is a shame that at least some monuments where this factor was most relevant were not reproduced in full colour. In summary, I look forward to the approaches which are

espoused so successfully in this volume moving into the mainstream in early medieval monumental sculpture research, and I hope it stands as a template for what can and should be achieved for monument studies of the later Middle Ages, which are yet to fully embrace the value of socially theorized approaches.

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Charles E. Orser, Jr. *A Primer on Modern-World Archaeology* (Principles of Archaeology. New York: Eliot Werner Publications Inc., 2014, 172pp., 10 figs, ISBN 978-0-9898249-2-7)

I would like to begin this review with Orser's belief and claim that the archaeology of the modern-world is the most relevant archaeology (for instance, pp. 107, 146). This provocative statement will be controversial (as he admits) and even unsettling to some of his readers. As a reader, two questions follow from such a claim: what is modern-world archaeology and why is it the most relevant archaeology? The answers to these two questions form the backbone of Orser's clear, concise, and debatable *Primer*, which comes as an update to his previous *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World* (1996).

In its most essential definition, as stated in the preface of the book, modern-world archaeology 'is a kind of historical archaeology

of the past five centuries that has as one of its main goals the analysis and interpretation of the union of the four great metaproceses (or haunts) of modernity: colonialism, capitalism, Eurocentrism, and racialization' (p. v). It has thus a conceptual meaning that goes beyond a mere post-AD 1500 chronological understanding; and a political commitment that engages the local and the global and the present and the past. After acknowledging the necessary, but, in Orser's view, insufficient, contributions of what he refers to as traditional historical archaeology, he goes on to break down the main features behind his definition of modern-world archaeology in the eight chapters that integrate the book.