

REVIEWS

Jonathan M. Wooding and Lynette Olson (eds), *Prophecy, Fate and Memory in the Early and Medieval Celtic World*, Sydney Series in Celtic Studies 18, Sydney: University Press 2020; ISBN 9781743326732; 282 pp; paperback; 22 pounds sterling.

This splendid book has something for everybody. It is written by experts and while the scholarly apparatus of extensive footnotes seems daunting at first, all the papers are clearly written and accessible. The book is in fact perfect for those with pandemic-induced leisure, as it opens up enticing new vistas for exploration along both main routes and byways. The contents are both more and less than the title suggests for, apart from the first paper — on a Roman-period inscription from the Swiss Alps —, they cover only the Celtic Isles from the first millennium CE, so hardly ‘early’ by most definitions, which would be around the seventh century BCE. The two ‘Scottish’ papers in the collection don’t even claim to be ‘Celtic’, one being on thirteenth-century Anglo-Scottish law, the other on the fifteenth-century chapel at Rosslyn. Similarly, few of the papers deal specifically with ‘prophecy’ or ‘fate’, though most have some connection to ‘memory.’

The connection between religious pilgrimage and landscape is one of the principal themes, ranging from Tomás Ó Carragáin’s astonishing depiction of a densely-populated Dingle Peninsula with a church every couple of kilometres to Penelope Nash’s discussion of the diffusion of ornament in ecclesiastical manuscripts from the islands to western Germany, via an analysis of pilgrimage/exile as an act of worship, by Meredith Cutrer, and the fascinating recreation by Jonathan Wooding of a thousand-year old ecclesiastical landscape, on the basis of a fragmentary inscription found on a Welsh estate. The erudition of this paper echoes that of the book’s first chapter, by Bernard Mees, on a late Lepontic (Italo-Celtic) inscription from Liddes in the Swiss Valais — there are grammatical and letter-form parallels with the famous zinc tablet from Bern, a tiny and beautiful object dedicated to a smith-god of the city. If I may add an archaeometallurgical footnote, zinc-ores are common in the Valais and it would be pleasant to think that there was a closer and older connection between Liddes and Bern than just scribal practice, given the ‘early Celtic’ expertise in metalworking (for which see Chapter 1 of my *Celts in Mainland Europe*.)

Another important theme is the integration or attempted integration of a sophisticated legal system into the practice of rural societies far removed from the imperial cities which created it. This is examined in two deeply thoughtful articles by Constant Mews and by Stephen Joyce on the corpus of Irish canon law compiled c.700, showing how the compilers attempted to understand Christianity’s approach to matters of politics and even daily life. One of the joys of these papers is to read extracts from some wonderful texts, especially those of Gildas, the great British doomsayer, discussed by Joyce. Gildas is quoted again by Lynette Olson, who traces the descent of his *Downfall of Britain* (mid-sixth century) through Bede (early eighth) and Nennius (ninth) to the tenth-century Welsh-language *Armes Prydein*, the ‘Prophecy of Britain’ in which the Anglo-Saxons would be driven out by a highly unlikely coalition of non-Anglos: ‘the foreigners will be starting for exile, one ship after the other.’ Olson deals not only

with the influence of Gildas but also introduces the notion of ‘chosen trauma’, or the memory of a catastrophic event which creates a group identity.

Other great quotes are given in the very different paper by Roxanne Bodsworth on the contrasting views of the Irish heroines Deirdre as victim, and Gráinne as predator, in both medieval and modern literature. She does not discuss the classical parallels, which I believe would have been in the mind of nineteenth-century translators, between Deirdre and Helen of Troy or Gráinne and Venus ‘toute entière à sa proie attachée’ (Racine, *Phèdre*, act 1, sc.3). Despite this, she does have a stimulating feminist perspective.

The article most likely to appeal to a Scottish audience is the substantial discussion by Cynthia Neville of the correspondence between the twelfth- and thirteenth-century kings of Scotland and the papacy. This echoes the much earlier discussion on Irish canon law, but in a completely other dimension. These kings wanted to become part of Europe, not just the church, and worked at broadening their knowledge base. Scottish lawyers studied on the mainland and returned as persons of influence, four of them serving as chancellors.

This collection ends with a paper by Carole M. Cusack, which is a serious analysis of pseudo-religion as manifested in the best-selling novel — and now much-remaindered — *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) and its exploitation by the local tourist industry at the chapel of Rosslyn, near Edinburgh. She also discusses another best-selling work, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (1982, rev. ed. 2005), which touches upon freemasonry. I can add a ‘Celtic’ element from an epic work of pseudo-science, *The Hiram Key* (1996), which claims that anybody who was anybody in Mediterranean or Western culture was a freemason – including Saint Patrick. Cusack might like to add this to her list of horrors.

In all this is a genuinely interesting book; eclectic, but an excellent insight into current scholarship on the early Christian world of the Celtic islands. It is gratifying to see that eight of the eleven authors are principally based in Australia. Of the other authors, two are based in Ireland and one in Canada. Some are well-established, others are just starting on their scholarly careers, but the future of Celtic Studies is certainly in good hands.

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Richard Bradley (with Amanda Clarke, Andrew Fitzpatrick, Hugo Lamdin-Whymark, Roderick McCullagh and Alison Sheridan), *Stages and Screens: An Investigation of Four Henge Monuments in Northern and North-Eastern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2011); ISBN: 978-0-903903-38-1. 195 pp; 10 pounds sterling.

This lavishly illustrated book is a delight; both academically cutting-edge and accessible enough for the reader interested in prehistoric monuments, the Scottish landscape, and contemporary interpretations of antiquities. The volume is in two parts, the first focused on Richard Bradley and Amanda Clarke's 2005-2007 excavations at Broomend of Crichtie, Aberdeenshire, and the second about Bradley and Hugo Lamdin-Whymark's 2008 excavation at Pullyhour, Caithness. The latter is supplemented by reports on 'Roderick McCullagh's investigation of a small enclosure at Lairg' and the dig by 'the Time Team at the henge monument overlooking Loch Migdale' (p. xxi).

Broomend of Crichtie was excavated by Bradley and Clarke for three reasons: an 1855 excavation had identified Bronze Age burials there; James Richie in 1920 established that the henge was part of a larger complex; and it retained its bank, and thus may offer better dating than monuments that had been flattened by farming. Chapter 1 on the excavations has four sections, discussing the components of the monument complex, the 1855 excavation, the 2005-2007 excavation, and the finds from that excavation in the context of those identified by C. E. Dalrymple in 1855, which are in the National Museum of Scotland. The large photographs are superb; they add to the narrative of the site for experts and non-experts alike, as details discussed in the text are clearly visible in the illustrations. There are also excellent tables, diagrams, and sketches of artefacts, which are large and detailed. Chapter 2 covers the local setting of the Broomend of Crichtie henge, noting relationships between components (the avenue, shaft grave, post holes, portal stones, stone circle, cemeteries, and earthwork) and the finds from the site (pottery, urn and cist burials, and so on). Chapter 3 considers the wider context of Aberdeenshire monuments, similar British monuments (especially in Wales), and Bronze Age archaeology more generally.

Part 2 opens with Chapter 4, 'The Excavation of Three Small Monuments in Sutherland and Caithness,' and explains the differences from the deep-dive into Broomend of Crichtie the reader has just experienced: the sites are small, the excavations are limited, and this creates difficulties for interpretation. The strength of the exercise is that all the monuments have strong similarities that justify the study. The three sites are: Pullyhour, Caithness; Loch Migdale, Sutherland; and Achinduich Farm, Lairg, Sutherland. Following the template of Part 1, Chapter 5 discusses the regional context of these henges and considers unexcavated sites (for example, Contin and Cononbridge), whether comparison of small sites with large complexes like Broomend of Crichtie is a fruitful avenue to pursue in such research (this reader was pleased to read about Machrie Moor and Croft Moraig, two sites she visited a few years ago), and whether particular henges are 'self-contained' (p. 166) or interrelated in some way. Chapter 6 explores the wider context of the Pullyhour, Lairg, and Loch Migdale henges. It highlights recurrent questions about the reuse of monuments, the relations between the Scottish Neolithic and Bronze Age, and the Irish or British archaeology of these

periods more broadly, as well as the advances that technological analysis (pollens, new dating techniques, and a plethora of new data for comparison) facilitates.

The book concludes with a brief ‘Summing Up’ by Bradley. The reference list is extensive, and the book is extremely interesting. It merits a wide audience, and one not limited to archaeologists, Scottish studies scholars, and specialists in the area. The text is highly readable, the illustrations beautiful, and the arguments made with great clarity and accessibility. It is also extremely inexpensive for such a lavish publication. I recommend it unreservedly.

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Maria Hayward, *Stuart Style: Monarchy, Dress and the Scottish Male Elite* (Yale: New Haven, 2020); ISBN: 978-0-300-24036-8; 368 pp; 42 pounds sterling.

Stuart Style is a very attractive volume with many beautiful and vibrant illustrations that highlight the stunning material world of the Stuart elite. It should be essential reading for those with an interest in the history of fashion and textiles, court studies, the monarchy and nobility in early modern Britain. It would also appeal more widely to those teaching courses on the subject as it is clear and concise in its approach. There are helpful timelines of main events and the evolution of Stuart fashion through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One refreshing aspect of this volume is its emphasis on the retention of Scottish symbolism, fashion, textiles and craftsmen after James IV of Scotland becomes James I of Britain. All the Stuart monarchs and Heads of State are examined with the exception of Oliver Cromwell and William of Orange as they represent a break in the Stuart royal line. Indeed, the inclusion of the Jacobites within the study is reflective of this wish to follow the legitimate male royal line and link Jacobite material culture with earlier Stuart objects. The study takes a long view from the 1560s to the 1690s and is structured in three parts. Part I looks at the fashion of individual Stuart monarchs. Part II focuses on the role of craftsmen, court officials in London and Edinburgh in creating the Stuart look. Part III examines Stuart fashion and material objects within the context of specific social occasions such as sport, hunting, religious ceremonies and funerals. In all, it is a comprehensive and wide-ranging analysis of elite fashion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As Hayward shows all the monarchs under examination were keenly aware of the power of fashion to project their own authority. For example, Hayward successfully challenges English critics of James I by highlighting his awareness of how to use fashion effectively to promote the image and the policies of the monarch. Instead, of being a slovenly and unkept character, James is seen as smart, tidy and clean with excellent taste in fine textiles and accessories, yet unlike his son Charles I, James was keenly aware of how excess could alienate the public. There is also an excellent case study of Prince Henry, which gives valuable insights into princely adolescent attitudes towards fashion. Charles II and his brother James II had similar attitudes and tastes in fashion. However, what is interesting about both brothers is their experiences and struggles to obtain and wear fashions befitting their kingly and princely statuses whilst in exile and relative poverty. Looking at the entire period from 1603 to 1690 it is clear that European influences, particularly French influences, had a significant impact on the Stuart wardrobe and the range of colours available which expanded with every passing decade.

Hayward also uncovers the large community of nobility and craftspeople that made Stuart fashion possible. Not only were Edinburgh and London equal centres of fashion in Britain but there was a large community of Scottish merchants and tailors in London who supplied the Court and the Stuart elite. Central to these elite fashion circles were those craftspeople and merchants who dealt in accessories. As Hayward is keen to stress accessories were a key part of an outfit and not just an 'add on.' Indeed, throughout the seventeenth century the market for different kinds of accessories grew, especially locks of hair and miniatures, proving that these were sought after items long before the emergence of Jacobite material culture in the later seventeenth century. The Stuarts and

their elites had a deep love of exquisite and finely crafted symbolic family orientated jewellery throughout the seventeenth century.

There is also a keen acknowledgement of the role of fashion and textiles more widely in the day to day lives of the Stuart elites, revealing fascinating insights into social customs and habits alongside the Stuart obsession of projecting a well-crafted image in public spaces. Viewing the King's bedchamber through clothes and routines of dressing it is revealed as a place of formal and informal power structures. Elites also regularly changed their clothes to suit the social occasion, whether it be playing sport, a christening or a funeral. Indeed, in a religious context, as Hayward shows, the royal use of religious objects could provoke religious debate amongst the public at large and cause significant problems for the monarch. Overall, this book is an absorbing, colourful account of the importance of the material world in Stuart Britain and should be essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand how the Stuart monarchs and their male elite used fashion and textiles to consciously cultivate an image for public consumption.

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