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Book Reviews



NEW VOICES ON EARLY MEDIEVAL SCULPTURE IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND. Edited by Michael F. Reed. Pp. iv and 74, Illus 42. Archaeopress (British Archaeological Reports British Series, **542**), 2011. Price: £28.00. ISBN 978 1 407308 40 1.

This is an edited volume with seven contributions aimed at presenting new discussion and bringing debate to the field of early medieval stone sculpture. However, most of the contributions still focus on the aesthetic attributes of stone sculpture and they rely heavily on methodologies that compare and contrast their decorative aspects. Nowhere is this more evident than in the introductory chapter by Michael F. Reed, who provides an historical overview of the subject from the time of W.G. Collingwood to present iconographic studies by individuals such as Jane Hawkes (*The Sandbach Crosses: sign and significance in Anglo-Saxon Sculpture*, 2002). Yet this chapter fails to address current research trends that aim to theorize stone sculpture studies and re-engage the monuments within a broader context. Subsequently, there is no critical assessment of current research directions. The volume also claims to be a discussion of Britain and Ireland but fails to include papers that deal with either Scottish or Welsh monuments. This is an oversight also reflected in the historical overview which does not deal with recent discoveries or work in either country (pp. 1–13).

Three chapters fulfil the criteria of the book. The first is Zoë Devlin's chapter, which explores the use of monuments within a Lincoln cemetery, providing a fresh approach to early medieval sculpture. A landscape perspective is employed, as she seeks to understand how funerary monuments operated within bounded and planned space, using movement, visibility and memory to comprehend their function. Devlin's search leads her to seek out how monuments were used to create and remember specific types of identity, and she demonstrates how space was valued differently (pp. 32–41). Heather Rawlin-Cushing provides a thought-provoking contribution. Her work focuses on the reuse of a Roman inscription within an early medieval burial in York Minster — she suggests that this provided a mechanism through which the Roman past was re-appropriated to create an identity for the dead in this burial monument (p. 55). Her attempt to provide a biography for the inscription, and its potential use in creating a future identity for the dead, touches on key themes in current debate. One surprising omission is that there is no discussion of the associated *in situ* burial. If this was a monument built to create an identity, can we see any support for these arguments in the burial itself? Orla Murphy's short contribution explores the technique of laser scanning stones. It provides a useful account of the methodology and the outcomes of such practices. However, this is no longer a new technique, and to justify its presence in the

volume, some form of critical discussion would have been beneficial. For example, what are its known limitations? Can the data be overly manipulated to give false results?

The remainder of the contributions, whilst offering interesting observations regarding various monuments within the British Isles, do not provide the new perspectives promised in the book. They also suffer due to the poor quality of many of the images, particularly as much of the discussion is based on ways of *seeing* monuments.

Overall this volume does not live up to its title. With the theoretical discussion and application limited to Devlin's and Rawlin-Cushing's papers, this undermines the volume's intentions. Although many of the contributions are interesting case studies in their own right, this volume does not manage to shake off the influence of art-historical methodologies and the preoccupation with recognizing cultural influences as suggested by the documentary evidence.

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