

JOURNAL *of* NORTHERN STUDIES



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The *Journal of Northern Studies* is a peer-reviewed academic publication issued twice a year. The journal has a specific focus on human activities in northern spaces, and articles concentrate on people as cultural beings, people in society and the interaction between people and the northern environment. In many cases, the contributions represent exciting interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. Apart from scholarly articles, the journal contains a review section, and a section with reports and information on issues relevant for Northern Studies.

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proposed here. At the end of the volume, there is a section on lost names, older “district and village names,” an extensive section on topographical words (pp. 365–435), as well as several indexes listing the district’s place-names, place-names outside Trøgstad, and the appellatives occurring in the volume. In addition, there are indexes of personal names and bynames. There is also a map of the district in a pocket at the end of the book. The name interpretations in the volume are, as usual, highly meritorious, both linguistically and, not least, factually. We look forward with great anticipation to the day when the settlement names in all of the twenty-two districts in Østfold have been published.

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Anu Lahtinen & Mia Korpiola (eds.), *Dying Prepared in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe*, Leiden: Brill 2018, ISBN 9789004284890, ix + 211 pp.

The volume contains an introduction by the editors which summarizes the topics that individual chapters address. These consist of eight essays, of which five deal with Sweden, one with a medieval English bishop, one with Iceland, and one with Lesser Poland (the provinces of Krakow, Sandomierz, and Lublin). Four chapters deal with or include the Middle Ages; six focus on or include the Early Modern period. The authors examine sources ranging from the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries which include wills, funeral sermons, legal texts, court records and fictional historical narratives (sagas).

Readers of the volume are assumed to be knowledgeable about the concept of, and literature concerning, a “good death” in these periods. For those who are not, I strongly recommend beginning with Bertil Nilsson’s contribution; pp. 190–199 in particular describe the ideas about penance and purgatory that prevailed in the Late Middle Ages. It should be noted that although there can be deathbed “repentance” (or “penitence”) and confession, deathbed “penance,” in the sense of “satisfaction,” is impossible, as by then it is impossible to carry out the required actions: the soul of an individual in this situation will go to purgatory. This is sometimes not clear in the other articles that deal with this period.

In Lutheranism, of course, there is no place either for penance or purgatory, although a formal deathbed confession was thought to ease the way into the next life. Such confessions included not only sins and forgiveness that would affect the fate of the departing soul, they also had legal implications. Mia Korpiola examines the way sworn testimony concerning such confessions could be used in court as evidence for debts by—or to—the deceased, while statements about someone dying from wounds could significantly influence the fate of the individuals involved.

Cindy Wood shows that Bishop William Wykeham’s concern for the fate of his soul in the late fourteenth century was not a sudden, deathbed decision, but had been characteristic of his entire career. Among other foundations, two educational institu-

tions, Winchester College and New College, Oxford, were originally intended to provide prayers for him in the afterlife.

Anu Lahtinen examines preparations for their passing made by aristocrats in Early Modern Sweden. Like Wykeham, Baron Henrik Fleming of Lais (1584–1650) had made donations to churches in his community, not in the hope of post-mortem benefits but rather to ensure that his memory be maintained. Another young nobleman faced with execution arranged not only for the welfare of his soul but also for the honorable treatment of his corpse, and of his surviving female relatives. Lahtinen notes the role played by the women in the family in preserving the memory of the deceased.

Dominika Burdzy's article examines Catholic and Protestant wills from sixteenth century Poland as well as foundation documents for ecclesiastical institutions and statutes of guilds and confraternities. Sixteenth-century funeral sermons give insight into the society of the time—I was particularly struck by the number of women whose business and administrative activities were recorded. Also striking was the case of the noblewoman Katarzyna Radziwiłł (1544–1592), whose funeral led to the publication of two polemical sermons, one Catholic and one Calvinist (her husband belonged to that denomination). This wide-ranging chapter presents material comparable to that used by other authors in the volume, and would have benefitted by an English proof-reader familiar with the ecclesiastical concepts involved. Although the author defines terms such as “Dry Days” and “mourning masses” (once miswritten “mournful”), other terms are less clear. “Temple,” for example, is not commonly used for a Christian religious building in the western church. “Diocesan and religious temples” on p. 110 clearly include the cathedral and, based on the remainder of the article, churches rather than convents or monasteries. To what extent are the altar foundations mentioned similar to chantries?

What can be done for individuals not in a position to prepare themselves properly for their deaths? Otfried Czaika examines the situations of soldiers who die on the battlefield, women (and their children) who die in childbirth, and how their lives (or their mothers') as a whole could be interpreted as “preparation.”

Both before and after the Reformation, suicide was the ultimate crime, as it implied lack of faith in God's mercy. While the families of Swedish suicides did not face confiscation of the property of the deceased, the issue of the salvation of the individual's soul, and burial in a churchyard, were important for the survivors. Riikka Miettinen considers the types of evidence (including a pious position of the body, or a plea of insanity) that might be admitted in such cases. It appears that the authorities were often willing to give a verdict of insanity that would allow respectable burial within the churchyard. An unusual strategy of prospective suicides may have been confessing to real or imagined crimes that would lead to their execution—before which, of course, they would be able to repent and receive communion, thus making a “good” death that would enable them to enter heaven (p. 177).

Kirsi Kanerva's paper is something of an outlier, as the evidence she examines is not contemporary with the deaths involved. The Icelandic sagas she discusses were written by thirteenth-century Christians but are set in the pagan ninth–tenth centuries. They describe an imagined past, one that cannot be verified by any sort of documentary evidence. It is generally agreed that authors of sagas accepted the “difference” of pre-Christian times—magic, for example, was considered a perfectly normal activity “back then.” It is interesting to see how thirteenth-century Icelanders imagined preparations for death in that pagan past. Obviously, there is no question of preparing one's soul for heaven. Kanerva examines how the matriarch Unnr in *Laxdæla saga* makes her final

preparations, obtaining a “good memory” and (as far as her descendants are concerned) unproblematic afterlife. Hrappr, in the same saga, also prepares for death but, consistent with his character while alive, his living corpse causes problems after his death, killing the servants and laying waste to his farm. Þórólfr in *Eyrbyggja saga* makes no such provisions, but his son anticipates trouble and tries, unsuccessfully, to pre-empt it (cf. *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* Ch. 58). I was surprised by the absence from this chapter of one Christian character in *Eyrbyggja saga*—the Hebridean Þorgunna—who not only makes preparations for her death and burial at a future Christian site, but revives afterwards to see to the restoration of social equilibrium (as defined in the thirteenth century) in the form of the expectation that parties taking a corpse for burial would receive proper hospitality during their journey. It is interesting to note that she, like Unnr (who however remains passive after her death), contributes to the well-being of the living, as opposed to the two male revenants who cause death and destruction.

In a volume like the present one, with contributors whose native languages are not English, it is more than usually the publisher’s duty to provide careful proofreading. This could have been done more thoroughly in the present volume. There are numerous misplaced adverbs such as “confession takes normally place” (p. 144), odd vocabulary such as *stung* for *stab* (pp. 73, 75), *rest* for *bury* or *put to rest* (p. 120), which should have given a native speaker pause, as should the “camera complex scholastic apparatus” (p. 120) or the preparations made “in front of” a violent death (p. 133). *Reformatory* instead of *Reform* or *Reformation* (p. 191) will make North American readers think of detention centers for juvenile criminals.

The contributors are, however, to be praised for their detailed research, as are the editors for allowing footnotes rather than end-notes. These notes are full of valuable information and will repay readers’ attention, the more so since the Bibliography is “select” and numerous references found in the notes are not included in it. The volume as a whole makes a significant contribution to the field.

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Shane McCorristine, *The Spectral Arctic. A History of Dreams and Ghosts in Polar Exploration*, London: University College London Press 2018, ISBN 9781787352476, 275 pp.

In Westminster Abbey in London there is an epitaph written by Lord Alfred Tennyson: “Not here! The white North has thy Bones; and thou Heroic Sailor-Soul art passing on thine happier Voyage now toward no earthly Pole.” The hero Tennyson refers to is Sir John Franklin, perhaps the most famous polar explorer of them all. He and his 133 companions manning the ships *Erebus* and *Terror* went missing in the Baffin Bay area in the High Arctic in 1845. They all perished and it was not until 1854 that the Hudson Bay Company employee John Ray was informed by Inuit witnesses of the fate of the expedition. There was clear evidence of cannibalism among the British sailors according to the Inuit. This was of course contested in Britain and the Inuit were even accused