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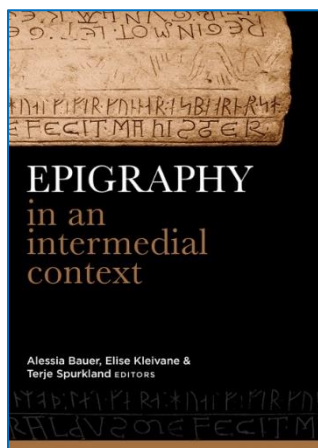**BOOK REVIEW: Alessia Bauer, Elise Kleivane and Terje Spurkland ed., *Epigraphy in an Intermedial Context* (Portland: Four Courts Press, 2018), 216 p., ISBN: 978-1-84682-716-7**

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*Epigraphy in an Intermedial Context* is a collection of nine essays with an introduction, proceedings of the international conference held in Oslo in November 2016, focusing on Viking Age and medieval epigraphy from Northern Europe. The originality of this study is on the concept of 'intermediality' as the prism through which inscriptions can be studied. As Terje Spurkland notes in the introduction, an inscribed artifact is a multifaceted object of investigation, and calls for a multi- or interdisciplinary approach, but how far one should stretch this multi- or interdisciplinarity is an open question. This reflection re-joins a broader movement in medieval epigraphy launched thirty years ago, which considered the social practices of writing and, more generally, literacy. Epigraphy, formerly considered as an auxiliary science of history, has become one of the fundamental sciences of the written word, at the crossroads of disciplines (history, art history, archaeology, linguistics, literature, palaeography, liturgy, etc.). An inscription is now understood as both a verb and matter, placing the text in context, whose spatial, visual and plastic, iconic, as well as symbolic dimensions are important.

Intermediality, which can be defined as an interaction between two or more media—a crossing of borders between media, a fusion more than a juxtaposition (a medium is understood as an intervening agency, means or instrument by which something is conveyed or accomplished)—was developed in the fields of literary studies and interarts studies, in Germany and in Canada (above all the Université de Montréal, with the Centre de recherche sur l'intermédialité founded twenty years ago). The bibliography at the end of the book presents a good list of the recent publications on these topics, including O Rajewsky, L. Elleström, B. Herzogenrath, R.H. Jones, M.E. Nelson, and G. Rippl. The authors of each article discuss the

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definition of media and modes, the difference between multi- and intermediality, and adapt it following the invitation of O Rajewsky.

In the first study, Anthony Harvey shows how linguistic evidence and philological arguments can shed new light on the early medieval inscriptions in Wales. Invented in the early Gaelic world for use on wood, the ogham alphabet had secondarily been adopted for stone: thirty or more stones, dotted across Wales, dating from the mid-first millennium, bear short inscriptions in Gaelic in the ogham alphabet –mostly personal names– but were accompanied by closely related texts using the Roman alphabet. Why inscribe identical content in two alphabets and two languages? It is not convincing to suggest that the engravers were catering for two contemporary groups of readers, each familiar with one language and script and ignorant of the other. The new studies of Late Latin provide an important clue: the widespread epitaph's formula *hic jacet* was often written *hic jacit*, and the name of the buried person was in the genitive case, even if it was the subject. Instead of seeing this as a symptom of the decay of a dying language, it indicates the vitality of what was, by now, primarily a spoken Romance dialect. For example, the new reading of the term *civis* in an inscription in St Tudclud's church at Penmachno completely changes the meaning; it is less exciting than the previous interpretation, but it stands on more solid ground.

The relationship between Roman script and Runic script, both used on Anglo-Saxon inscribed objects, is explored by Elisabeth Okasha, as an example of intermedial usage. On the 350 inscribed objects from Anglo-Saxon England, 17 contain both Runic and Roman texts. These inscriptions, done mostly in stone, found in the northern half of Anglo-Saxon England are dated to 8th to the 9th centuries. E. Okasha wonders if there is a clear connection between the script used and the language used: Old English texts and texts containing only personal names can be written in Runes or in Roman script; Latin texts generally appear only in Roman script, but that is not always the case. It leads to the second question: what is the purpose of introducing the occasional rune into a Roman script text? For instance, in the Lancashire gold ring or the stone Monkwearmouth I, several motivations can be discerned: maybe Runes added quality, decorative dimension, saved space, exhibited skill, esoteric script, or indicated identity/origin of the carver. But how do we explain the texts on the Franks Casket made of whale bone? Perhaps Latin was felt to be appropriate to the subject-matter on the back, referring to the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70. As an historical event it was treated differently from the descriptions, it was intestinal with a multi-modal meaning. What is the purpose of repeating the same text (a memorial formula) in two scripts as seen in the Falstone stone? Perhaps it was to exhibit knowledge of both scripts rather than to offer practical assistance to a reader. These examples could be considered as containing a mutli-modal message and the use of two scripts adds a further layer of meaning to the inscribed objects.

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Svein H. Gullbekk discusses the nature of epigraphical evidence on eleventh-century Norwegian coinage. Even if minting was, by definition, a method of mass production (the reason why, in the past, numismatic evidence was excluded from the field of epigraphy), every single coin constitutes unique epigraphic evidence and carries individual peculiarities. In eleventh-century contexts, these particularities are interesting because they offer a wide range of variations that provide insight into the use of language (Latin or Old Norse) and its status in society. Generally, the name of the ruler or authority was behind the coinage appeared on the front and on the reverse was a legend with the moneyer in charge and the mint where the coin was struck. But in Norwegian coinage of the second half of 11th century, most of these legends were illegible (ex. the blurred legends in King Harald's coinage, 1047-1066, and even the use of pseudo-letters). What do the pseudo-legends reflect: die-cutters' ability, illiteracy in the use of Roman-alphabet writing, no need for meaningful legend in a literate sense? The numismatic evidence points in the direction of a society that was only partly literate at this time. When legible legends were applied, written Old Norse was the predominant and preferred language and Runes the preferred script.

Magnus Källström's article focuses on Master Harald from Västergötland and the interaction between Runes and Roman script. It is hard to estimate the total corpus of Harald's stone monuments. The author confines himself to the five or six inscribed grave slabs signed with Harald's name: the slabs from Ugglum church, Södra Ving churchyard, Slöta, Valtorp church, Gudhem churchyard, and a stone from Valstad Church in Västergötland. The dating of Harald's grave slabs is still under discussion, but are generally dated between twelfth and the middle of the thirteenth century. The majority are shaped like half a prism with three or five faces. Harald was very skilled in both Runes and Roman script, and could compose a text in the vernacular as well as in Latin, and in three cases, monuments have parallel inscriptions in Runes and in Roman letters that occupy one side of each of the slab. But what was the reading order? His Runic texts show a clear influence from conventions in the Roman script. Harald's orthography shows that the Runic system must have been a more powerful tool for reproducing the local language. It comprises special characters, but despite its qualities, the arrangement of the inscriptions indicates that the parts written in Latin script were given precedence in the text. The reason for this may be the commissioners, but this question of his sponsors (Cistercian monastery?) as well as the source of his education is still open.

By the interrogation "Fixed or fleeting?" Kristel Zimmer proposes some thoughts on the materiality and mediality of wooden artifacts from the old wharf of medieval Bergen. This collection of script-bearing objects (Scandinavia, primarily from the 2nd half of the 12th century. to the mid-fifteenth century) contains 680 items, but the author focuses on the small, inscribed wooden tables. In some of these

writing tablets and sticks, which are narrower, the inscriptions are partly meaningful with a decodable text, yet a considerable proportion contains incomprehensible units or rows of Runes, rune-like signs, traces of Runes or other markings. On the one hand they are fixed material items with their defined capacities and constraints, on the other hand the object can be experienced as fleeting, since they have been subject to changes and transformations (recycled, reused, with redefined functions). Even if it was not meant for long-term preservation, each of these objects emerged and are feature conscious and intentional media products. This production underlines the role of inscribed wood as a medium in the setting of a medieval town.

Elise Kleivane takes the *Ave Maria* inscribed on gravestones, a wooden tankard, a door ring, altarpieces, and church bells from Norway, to illustrate how 'one and the same' text can be used for a number of different purposes. Since the verbal form of the prayer is (or should be) the same in every context, the text alone cannot inform much about the function, but the context in which the inscribed prayer, used primarily in oral form, has been manifested may be studied, and reveal much about the intended function of the inscription, and also about its continued use. These utterances, with the abbreviated title *Ave Maria* or the whole prayer, using both modes, Runes and Roman script, reveal different intentions and functions depending on cultural context and competences. For instance, carved in a gravestone, *Ave Maria* is an encouragement to pray for the soul of the person buried and could also be a statement on behalf of the deceased or the commissioner; placed at an entrance, it could protect against the devil and his powers; the altar front from Gran on Hadeland, where the prayer is combined with images from the Virgin's life, could serve as a 'teaching tool' as well as an object to aid devotion

Lisbeth M. Imer and Rikke Steenholt Olesen study apotropaic amulets in Denmark, not in wood – the more common material – but in lead. One hundred have been found with the introduction of the metal detector in Danish archaeology, at the beginning of the 1980s. These amulets, worn in a pocket or sewn into the clothes, sometimes bear Runic inscriptions with minuscule letters, but there is a large number of amulets with Roman-letter inscriptions in Latin, such as those found in Vestor Broby, in Bregninge, in Troelseby, in Lejre, and in Svendborg. They start with "in the name of the Lord/Father…" and the Gospel of John. Despite the differences, Roman-letter and Runic amulets also have similarities, such as a Christian prayer or the mention of evil beings, that express the same tradition. For the first time, we see four amulets from Denmark written in the vernacular, whereas Latin languages usually dominated the texts when people carved apotropaic prayers and benedictions. During the early Middle Ages, the pre-Christian tradition intermediated with the new faith and included a new language (Latin), a new script (Roman letters), as well as a new type of material (lead).

The Eggeby stone, in Sweden, Viking Age memorial runestone. Photo: Berig [CC BY 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0)]

By focusing on the rune-stone U 69 Eggeby (Spånga sn, Sollentuna hd, Uppland, Sweden), Marco Bianchi is interested in potential traces of other media in with Runic inscriptions and how they might have been understood by contemporary,

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Viking-Age readers, as well as how the rune-stone was perceived by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century researchers to whom it was mediated through a corpus edition. None of those scholars involved seems to have visited the rune-stone, their conclusions are based on a corpus edition and the pictures in Johan Göransson's *Bautil* from 1750: the *rune-stone* medium was presented as a stone on paper in the *book* medium. M. Bianchi discusses whether three specific and compact sequences of the text could be regarded as intermedial references: the Christian prayer 'may God help his spirit and soul better than he deserved,' the eternity formula 'no monument will be greater,' and the mention of a bridge-building project. The first one is an intermedial reference because it has the potential to create an illusion of liturgical practices; the second, a citation of a larger poem, can be categorized as an intertextual reference; the third serves as an indexical marker that makes the connection between the bridge and the rune-stone and forms a 'media combination' in which each media contributes to the semiotic potential of the whole monument.

Alessia Bauer wonders whether *Runica manuscripta* can be considered as multimodal expressions or whether they are just intermedial texts in a broader sense. Before analyzing a selection of Nordic medieval records, she establishes her own criteria for multimodality: concomitance of meaning-making modes; interaction of the various modes; and the message should not be a simple explication of the displayed modes. As Runes have been exclusively created for epigraphics, all manuscript Runes are multimodal products, but not all of them are intermedial in the narrow sense. The first examples are the introduction of Runic signs as new letters, or for their ideographic meaning, playing the role of an abbreviation. These examples show clearly multimodal communication. Some manuscripts have longer sequences of Runes (personal names for the most part); the manuscript preserved in the University Library of Erfurt in Germany (MS CE 23 V8vo, 13th-15th century) presents *scriptura mixta* with a single rune and otherwise Roman letters, and on the last leaf of the chronicle, the owner's signature added in the 15th century (*Mogens Hvat possidet me*). A marginal note on a very old manuscript from Anglo-Saxon Britain (London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A XV: 9th-11th century) presents a magic spell against blood-poisoning; the Runic entry records computistic writings in Latin and in Old English. What was the function of manuscript Runes? Most of them do not show any kind of interplay with the other modes (apart from ideographic Runes); it seems that writing with Runes expressed just the interest of the copyists in experimenting with different modes and the opportunity to show their skills.

As T. Spurkland wrote in the conclusion of his introduction 'if that conclusion is that the aspect of intermediality and/or related concepts add to the observational adequacy of our data, or on the contrary, they do not, then this book has served its purpose.' Yes, by the analysis of stones, coins, lead amulets, wooden plates, manuscripts, and an edited corpus, this book has achieved its objective and clearly

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demonstrates how an intermedial reading of a Runic or Roman letter inscription can add further dimensions to the understanding of its communicative potential. It provides new insights into the communicative strategies of rune carvers/writers and the meaning-making potential of Runic carvings/writings. And even more, it is an invitation to go beyond the borders and to broaden the reflection to all medieval inscriptions. ❧