
*Living Memoria* is a volume of contributions by friends and colleagues of Truus van Bueren in honour of her retirement in 2011. Van Bueren’s speciality is *memoria*, which she and the volume’s editors define as “the commemoration of the dead” (p. 9). Van Bueren’s circle has concentrated on the ways that *memoria* “bound the living and the dead” and see it as “a key organizing principle, not only in medieval theology, but in every aspect of medieval life.” Memory has been an important topic of research in several fields for the past three decades or so, though not everyone has taken this particular approach to it. For the medieval period, investigations of how mnemonic strategies underlay many aspects of medieval life have been popular since the publication of Mary Carruthers’s *The Book of Memory* in 1990, as have studies applying the theory of collective memory to medieval people’s remembrance of past events.

Instead of these approaches, Van Bueren’s research group has focused on the ways in which medieval men and women from different parts of society attempted to ensure their own and their relatives’ salvation by “building monasteries, churches and chapels, commissioning memorial pieces, tomb monuments, donating gifts, founding masses and liturgical services” (p. 10). Their research is undergirded by the anthropological theory of gift-giving and reciprocity as it affected medieval society. Medieval donors gave their gifts of church buildings and the like in part that they might receive counter-gifts in the form of masses, prayers, and the like. Their gifts also contributed to social prestige and bonds between the living, as well as with the dead.

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3) Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld provides a stimulating overview of research into medieval gift-giving in ‘The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative
The principles of this view of memoria are laid out clearly in Van Bueren’s 2005 essay, “Care for the Here and the Hereafter,” where she sets out the status quaestionis and points to areas of future research, such as investigating the intentions of benefactors, identifying patrons, uncovering additional information about the recipients of donations and about the material sources connected to these donations. The twenty essays in Living Memoria follow up on her suggestions, giving the volume a clear unity of theme. The editors have organized the essays into three main sections: “Representation and Aspiration,” which focuses particularly on ecclesiastical donations for salvation, as laid out above; “Text and Context,” which focuses on the analysis of texts and written sources; and “Ritual and Image,” which looks at how images were constructed and how memorial objects could be reused.

Though the essays are too numerous to be discussed in detail, some major points can be noted. One is the significance of the Medieval Memoria Online (MeMO) project. The aim of the project is to allow for comparative, interdisciplinary, and quantitative research by gathering sources relating to memoria studies together in one place, including painted and sculpted memorial pieces, sepulchral monuments like floor slabs, narrative sources containing information regarding memoria, and memorial registrars (p. 17). MeMO contains inventories of the sources as well as a database listing the institutions from which the sources came. Several contributors refer to the project’s usefulness for their work, and Leen Breure’s essay discusses how memoria research and publication can benefit from new kinds of authoring media, such as enhanced publications and rich internet publications.

Two essays in the collection concentrate on the efficacy of burial strategies in cultivating the remembrance of royal personages and nobles families. They build on the approach taken by Van Bueren and Otto Gerhard Oexle in their article on “succession series,” which were series of memorial portraits used by secular and ecclesiastical lords to demonstrate their status and legitimacy of power. Utilizing the comparative approach favoured by Van Bueren, Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld tackles the question of how royal families across Europe strove to create official royal burial sites. The point of such necropolises was to “safeguard their lines of succession and guarantee eternal remembrance” (p. 26). In the same vein Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen examines how the donations made by Queen Margrete I of Denmark (1353–1412) both demonstrated genuine religious devotion and ensured the commemoration of herself and her family after death (p. 46). Johannsen also

4) Van Bueren, ‘Care for the Here and the Hereafter.’
5) http://memo.hum.uu.nl/. [Accessed 8 January 2013].