

Editorial: Haunted Landscapes

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The contents of this Special Issue on Haunted Landscapes are somewhat the result of a ‘happy accident’. Some papers were submitted in response to our call for the previous Special Issue on Folklore and the Landscape, others as ‘regular’ papers, but it became apparent that all are eerily connected. The three Articles presented here each deal, in their own way, with spectres in the landscape, haunting human inhabitants in the past or present and reflective of contemporary anxieties and concerns. They each employ different sources to interrogate these spectral landscapes. The geographical areas of research are all within northwest Europe, and two of these papers deal with the haunting effects of World War II on the landscapes of northernmost Europe. Thus, whilst we had originally intended to present two volumes broadly on ‘Folklore and the Landscape’, this issue demanded an even more specialist attention.

I preface these papers with a brief introduction that presents some connections between landscapes, spectres, folklore, archaeology and hauntology. Within this introduction are some key texts that contextualise the present articles in the broader research landscape and, I hope, encourage further research in this area that is of continuing fascination to researchers and non-researchers alike.

Tuuli Matila’s paper is a fascinating presentation of the German alteration of the northern Finnish landscape during WWII, and the manifestation of Nazi ideology in the materiality of German presence. Interrogating archival photographs, Matila articulates how Finland’s cooperation with Germany has been hitherto marginalised within the cultural consciousness and heritage narratives, and that these photographs are themselves ghosts of a difficult Finnish past.

The hauntological nature of WWII on northern Nordic landscapes is further explored in Hildegunn M.S. Traa’s paper ‘Haunted by the Memory of WWII’, in which she explores post-war folk narratives surrounding sites and landscapes in northern Norway. Here, she considers how the German occupation has left quite different scars on the landscape, and the ghost stories that represent an intense connection between people, local history, and the landscape.

Supernatural beings haunt the landscapes of nineteenth-century northwest England in Simon Young’s paper on ‘Public Bogies’. As shown in historical maps, and contrary to contemporary scholarship on the supernaturality of urban landscapes, bogies haunted the peripheries of towns and villages, and Young intriguingly explores this patterning and its implications.

These three Articles are followed by a short Note by Yvette Staelens on what might be termed ‘shadowscape archaeology’. In ‘Seekers in the Shadowscape – an archaeology of shade’, Staelens reflects on her experience of the rising of the sun on the 2020 summer solstice at the Cove stones, Avebury. She expresses the almost magical sensations of the casting of shadows and ponders what this might mean for how we think about the prehistoric mind and how we explore and interpret the past.

This volume is completed with book reviews by Laura Slack on Mississippian rock art and Jeremy Harte on the built environment of early medieval England.

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