

BOOK REVIEWS*Archaeology and the Media*

Edited by Timothy Clack and Marcus Brittain
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Very few can deny that the romantic accounts of bold archaeologists (both in fiction and in real life) discovering the remnants of ancient civilizations have fascinated the public for a long time. In fact, this rather romantic image conjured by the media and the popular audience may encourage—or perhaps merely compel—the practitioners of archaeology to interact more often with the media. Currently, archaeology is a more common subject matter in media than ever before. Similarly, the media is used more often now in archaeology than has ever been encountered in the past few decades. How archaeologists convey their research findings to a broader audience (beyond the academe) through the different forms of contemporary media and how the media depict archaeology in general may be regarded as very important considerations by the academics and/or professionals in the archaeological and media community.

The 2007 publication *Archaeology and the Media* offers a deeper perspective in the significance of this very complicated relationship. In this collection of essays, a group of internationally-acclaimed, media-savvy archaeologists presents an analyses of the various issues involving the complex connections between archaeology and the media as the two distinct fields both benefit—and sometimes mess up—each other. They examine a wide range of archaeology-related material in different forms of media, such as television, cinema, the popular press, photography, radio and video games. The combined efforts of the scholars rest on a dominant theme: the probable long-term repercussions of the greater publicity through and dependence of archaeology upon mass media at present and in the future.

The book is divided into five parts that represented the main points involved in the discourse regarding archaeology and media. In every section, the contributors provide plenty of information that put the

relationship of the two fields in the proper context. It should be noted, however, that the chapters may have overlapping premises. Such common ground seen in the different works of the contributors may be regarded as an indication of the multifaceted nature of the subject matter at hand.

The editors Timothy Clack and Marcus Brittain properly set the mood in the introductory chapter by discussing the general issues regarding the impact of archaeology and the media on each other, such as the portrayal of the discipline and its practitioners in the media, the accuracy of details in archaeology-related stories and the oversimplification or “dumbing-down” of disseminated information. Although rather lengthy, Clack and Brittain’s introduction manages to synthesise all the following chapters based on the unifying theme stated earlier.

Chapters 2 and 3 are under Part I: Archaeology’s Reception of the Media. In “An Archaeological Fashion Show,” Cornelius Holtorf discusses how archaeologists present themselves on television and print media through their manner of dressing. He makes it plain that archaeologists can and usually do take advantage of popular stereotypes regarding their appearance, such as the sexy adventurer (to some extent like the film icons Indiana Jones and Lara Croft), the unconventional fieldworker, the capable professional and the wise scholar. Certainly, the photographs of archaeologists wearing the stereotypical garb help to support Holtorf’s line of reasoning quite well.

Peter Fowler’s “Not Archaeology and the Media” basically comments on the archaeology-media relationship in terms of its relevance to society. In particular, Fowler shows deep disapproval of archaeology television programs that seem to promote treasure-hunting. To him, promoting such practices to the public goes against everything that good archaeology is supposed to be. Fowler also expresses his desire to communicate archaeology and enhance current educational programs through the use of museums. He even describes the various possibilities of using the fine arts, particularly landscape painting, as a means of communicating archaeology to the public.

Part II: Translating Archaeological Narratives consists of three chapters. For instance, “A Short History of Archaeological Communication” by Karol Kulik recounts the long and fruitful symbiosis between archaeology and the media in Britain. The chronology is divided

into five “ages” in order to straightforwardly underscore the positive and negative effects of the shifts in the interdependence among archaeology, the media and the popular audience through time. In this chapter, Kulik makes an obvious effort to dispel the misconception that archaeological communication with the public is a unique or recent phenomenon. It should be noted that Kulik’s history mainly discusses nonfiction media such as exhibits, radio, the press, and television.

Meanwhile, Clack and Brittain’s “In the Camera’s Lens: An Interview with Brian Fagan and Francis Pryor” provides valuable insights on the readiness of archaeologists to deal with various media formats. Fagan and Pryor drew on their extensive media experiences to give suggestions on the proper communication of archaeology through television and radio. The interview evidently shows the dissatisfaction of the two eminent archaeologists with the academe’s fixation with specialisation and the restrictive “publish or perish” mindset that could be detrimental to the further development of generalised yet serious popular archaeological narratives intended for laypersons.

Christine Finn delves into the remarkable union of science and art in “Darkness Disseminated: Lennart Larsen’s Images as Photojournalism, Pop Archaeology, and Works of Art.” She focuses on the emotional aspects of the images produced by the renowned Danish photographer Lennart Larsen for the Danish archaeologist Peter Glob’s 1965 *The Bog People*, a classic work regarding the people of the Northern European Iron Age. Finn expressively explores the interplay between Larsen’s evocative images and Glob’s moving narration that resulted in a beautiful form of archaeological storytelling that was radically different from most academic works. The chapter includes Larsen’s photographs of the Tollund Man and Graubelle Man, two of the most famous naturally-preserved human bodies found in the boglands of Europe.

The two chapters under Part III: Has Media Changed Archaeology? adequately answer the question posed by the section title. The chapter “Archaeology and the German Press” by Marion Benz and Anna Katrien Liedmeier traces how journalists and editors of popular German newspapers and magazines create and publish interesting reports using information from international and local archaeology scenes. As indicated by several charts presenting the results of their study, Benz and Liedmeier’s meticulous efforts reveal the journalistic perspectives that guide the selection of topics and style of writing in relation to archaeology. The two researchers say that the profuse yet

dissatisfactory reportage of archaeology in Germany could be improved if journalists and archaeologists work together to provide high-quality information derived from archaeological research. To them, this cooperation may help promote archaeology as both informative *and* entertaining to the popular audience without resorting to lurid sensationalism.

Jon Price talks about the effects of media's influence on the growth of archaeological research on the battlefield in his contribution "Great War, Great Story: A Personal View of the Media and Great War Archaeology." Although Price never intends to provide many historical details regarding the First World War, he gives emphasis to the fact that it was the first war in which modern media, particularly moving pictures, had an important role. Price recounts his personal experiences in France where he and other archaeologists collaborated with a media team in documenting the recovery and identification of the remains of Great War casualties. Price shows full awareness of the probable conflicts of interests and other ethical problems that may occur when the media funds the archaeological project for the sake of producing TV programmes to generate and cater to the upsurge in public interest. Despite such risks, however, he acknowledges that the relationship of archaeology and media will continue to flourish.

Four chapters give more attention to archaeology on television and film as indicated by Part IV: Visual Archaeology, their section title. In "Screening Biases: Archaeology, Television and the Banal," Tim Taylor draws on his extensive experiences with broadcast media to argue that the involvement of archaeology with the media is a vital mode of public service that may help justify the existence of a discipline that does not seem to have direct practicality. To Taylor, the shared interest of television and archaeology in banality or ordinariness puts forward important facets of daily life both in the past and at present. Furthermore, Taylor thinks that television and other types of media have the power to challenge humanity's prejudices regarding certain kinds of "sensational" human behavior. To support his claim, he uses cannibalism as an example of such behavior, a topic that he has studied in the academe and discussed on television.

"*Worldwonders and Wonderworlds': A Festival of Archaeological Film*" by Tom Stern views some examples of 20th-century German archaeology-themed films from a cultural perspective. Stern points out some significant trends in the depiction of archaeology in the different cinema

genres (e.g. instructional-scientific films, nationalistic films, sex films) and neatly places such fluctuations in proper historical context. To Stern, the outlandish and the unknown were often emphasised in many old archaeology films—as indicated by the elaborate sets and scanty costumes shown in accompanying photographs. Furthermore, he calls attention to the various archaeological film festivals in Europe because he believes that these events, despite offering good publicity, are still unacknowledged in studies involving archaeology-media relationships. In addition, Stern also examines an alternative style of filming employed by the French production company Gedeon-Produktion that shuns idealistic portrayals of archaeology.

The presentation of truth and authenticity through the manipulation of audiovisual details in archaeological documentary footage is the issue tackled by Angela Piccini's *"Faking It: Why the Truth is So Important to Archaeology."* Piccini takes note of the careful choreography of somewhat extraneous background elements, such as light and sound, which lends archaeological narratives on television the heightened appearance of reality *and* closeness so valued by the viewers. Also, Piccini finds it rather curious that the audience seem to have a preference for overtly "costumed" or dramatised reconstructions of past human lives—as seen in the example *Pompeii: The Last Day* by BBC1. To Piccini, the viewers have more faith in such simulations than in "live" or pre-recorded presenter-led archaeological stories because of their richness in audiovisual detail. This makes her realise that documentary accounts of the past (as well as other themes) require as much reconstruction as fictional representations of human life.

In *"The Iconography of Exhumation: Representations of Mass Graves from the Spanish Civil War,"* Layla Renshaw concentrates on the dramatic visual representations of the exhumations of the graves containing the Republicans executed by Nationalist soldiers during the Spanish Civil War. Renshaw provides a short historical background that revealed some details regarding the "fratricidal" violence and its aftermath on the survivors. This archaeological project was part of a bigger social movement to commemorate the slain Republicans and increase public consciousness of the civil war (still a taboo topic in many Spanish communities) through media coverage. Renshaw points out that many media representations of the bodies and objects retrieved from the graves did not show scientific details. To her, the images became more emotionally and politically powerful and allowed the expression of the

unsayable when the burials were shown in their original disorderly state that hinted at the violence that occurred.

The final section, Part V: Archaeology, the Media and the Digital Future deals with the “new media”—namely the digital audiovisual media involving the Internet that allows fast-paced data interpretation and dissemination. In the chapter “The Past as Playground: The Ancient World in Video Game Representation,” Andrew Gardner analyses how the representation of past societies that have proliferated from archaeological activities have penetrated the practice of playing video games. Gardner finds several key elements in archaeology-themed games, such as violence, survival through technological progress, lack of cultural diversity and superiority of some societies over others. Although Gardner has no intention of dwelling on the “evils” of playing video games, he expresses concern on the possibility that the distorted image of the past as seen in such games may contribute to further misrepresentation of archaeology in other types of media. Even so, he still sees video games as a potential way of educating players about the past and gave the suggestion of allowing archaeologists to provide input in game design.

The close ties between media and information design serves as the focal point of the last chapter “Digital Media, Agile Design, and the Politics of Archaeological Authorship” by Michael Shanks. He argues that the conventional design of archaeological methods tend to anticipate or predefine the types of data to be collected and examined. Shanks feels that this “top-down” approach somehow obscures the past because nobody uses new fresh strategies of interpretation. Shanks also examines the material qualities and the interconnectivity of media in the process of designing cyber-systems used for storing and retrieving data, archaeological or otherwise. Although his writing style seems rather technical because of the profusion of information technology (IT) jargon in his contribution, Shanks manages to make it clear that the materiality of all media technologies is inseparable from the act of information processing.

Without a doubt, *Archaeology and the Media* has many merits. It gives its readers a good idea about how archaeology and the media work for *and* against each other. Also, it encourages the readers to see the archaeology-media relationship as multifaceted rather than as a one-dimensional narrative. The volume also has plenty of URLs, photographs and charts that help expound the contributors’ arguments—albeit these supporting materials are presented in basic black and white instead of the

glossy full colour often seen in popular archaeology books. To be sure, the plain format of the book obviously indicates its academic purpose; nevertheless, it manages to convey its profound message clearly for the experts and amateurs in both disciplines.

Yet there are also some features in this volume that need to be criticised and avoided in future works regarding the relationship of archaeology and the media. For instance, although the book itself is fairly easy to read and understand, its contributors seem to assume that their readers, academicians or otherwise, are already familiar with the terminology used in media. For example, the concept of public-service broadcasting (PSB) in Britain may seem fairly straightforward, yet its nuances may still require more explanation for readers not familiar with the media industry—especially since one cannot assume that other countries have PSB. A glossary and some appendices could have easily clarified important concepts. Adding these materials would have enabled proper use of the necessary terminology in future research about the relationship of archaeology and the media.

In addition, it is impossible to overlook the fact that the book is deeply embedded in the Western—particularly the British—context. Consciously or not, the contributors (many of them based in Europe and America) put plenty of emphasis on Western archaeology and media. They often mentioned famous archaeological personalities and programs taken from the West, such as the British archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler and the successful British television show *Time Team*. Admittedly, the media products of Western origin have a powerful, far-reaching influence that virtually surpasses the efforts of local media; also, it may not be practical to discuss the relationship of archaeology and the media with a worldwide scope in a single volume. Nevertheless, the editors and writers should have exerted more effort to include contributions or examples about the archaeology-media relationships from other parts of the world.

Furthermore, it would be helpful to include chapters that reveal the perspectives of the people in the media industry who often feature archaeology in their works yet do not belong to the academic and/or professional archaeological community. Journalists, editors, filmmakers and other media practitioners may be able to effectively explain their side—such as their reasons for using and/or misusing archaeological topics and the factors that may complicate their relationship with archaeology.

Despite all these relatively minor mishaps, *Archaeology and the Media* is still of great significance to all the archaeologists and media practitioners intent on educating the public about archaeology. Indeed, the book is not a manual for media practitioners on the proper representation of archaeology. Nor is it a handbook for archaeologists who want to make contributions or at least communicate with the media. Nevertheless, the text does its best to give sufficient context and background information that may help all the people concerned with making archaeology more accessible and understandable to the public through the use of media. Despite the irony that this volume is not intended for mass consumption (or rather, to be purchased by laypersons at popular bookstore chains), it still suits the purposes of the scholars and practitioners of both archaeology and the media. To sum up, the book succeeds in shedding more light on the nature of the appeal that archaeology has for the public and the influence of media on the discipline itself.

Historic Bridges: Evaluation, Preservation and Management

Edited by Hojjat Adeli

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To date, the conservation and preservation of historic bridges are of interest to historians, engineers, architects and scholars. The Ohio State University, to which the book's editor is currently affiliated, had founded the Historic Bridges Conferences (HBCs) in 1985. This book is a compilation of papers from the 8th Historic Bridges Conference in April 2008. A collection of fourteen papers, this book is devoted to the history, preservation, restoration and management of historic bridges all over the world.

This fifteen-chapter book is divided into four parts, all pertaining to historic bridges. With the theme of History, Part 1 incorporates significant past events to explain the present state of the Mississippi Railway Crossing in Clinton, Iowa, and the Dragon Bridge of Li Chun in Ancient China. Charles Birsnstiel describes how as early as 1857, trading