

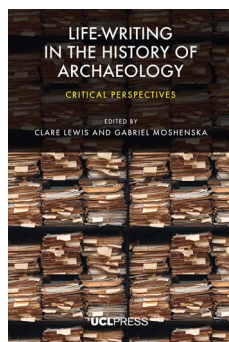
of *filigrana* glass link it to similar glass fragments found at Long Bay, Bahamas, where it is believed that Columbus first landed. Most significantly, the strontium values of a pig's tooth found at the site conform most closely to values from Seville, Spain, the place of origin of the first and second Columbus voyages.

In sum, Deagan achieves her stated aim of this book to present a comprehensive synthesis of all research undertaken at the site, in both pre- and post-contact contexts. She readily states and accepts that, in the process, many questions have remained unanswered, which is largely due to the time lapse between the end of excavations and the present. She even advocates reanalysis of the En Bas Saline legacy collections, particularly those that can help to better define the diet. As with her other books on Hispaniolan archaeology, *En Bas Saline: a Taino town before and after Columbus* will serve as an essential guide for how Caribbean archaeology approaches seminal legacy sites.

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CLARE LEWIS & GABRIEL MOSHENSKA (ed.). 2023. *Life-writing in the history of archaeology: critical perspectives*. London: University College London Press; 978-1-80008-450-6 paperback £35, OpenAccess. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781800084506>



One recent expression of archaeological self-reflexivity has been the use of life-writing to explore the people, places, institutions and relationships that have influenced the development of the discipline. In their Introduction, Clare Lewis and Gabriel Moshenska explain that life-writing can be conceptualised as “a set of practices, creating forms of writing that take individual lives as their focus or frame” (p.5). The first six chapters, grouped together under the heading ‘Critical perspectives’, address some fundamental questions about life-writing, its relationship to biography and microhistory and its relevance to the study of archaeological history. Readers learn that life-writing often engages topics and persons found at the periphery

of the discipline; much of it is based on the contents of institution or family archives that contain previously unstudied field notes and correspondence. In Chapter 1, Marc-Antoine Kaeser describes these mini-biographies as a social practice, a creation of self against a specific context and it is this theme of “life-writing as contextualization” that carries throughout the volume. Chapter 2, written by Thomas Gertzen, contains a useful example of (what we in linguistics would call) discourse analysis, explained as a form of “historical or higher criticism [that] has to be applied to reconstruct ‘the world behind the text’” (p.56). Thea De Armond’s Chapter 3 brings home the point that life-writing looks to the “margins, minor

figures and untold stories” (p.73) for answers to “broader historical questions” (p.74). These microhistories make room for people whose lives and careers did not end up exemplifying a great ‘success story’ but whose experiences tell us something about archaeology, its institutions and its ideologies. Chapter 4, authored by Jeffrey Abt uses as an example 30 years’ worth of one scholar’s funding proposals—most of which were not successful—that nonetheless solidified and clarified a research agenda. The lesson here is that, when one is studying the history of archaeology, one must include “failures and reversals” (p.110) because those are powerful forces that influence the direction of the field. In Chapter 5, Lewis introduces us to characters from personal letters from a father to his daughter over the course of the First World War as a poignant example of the “private/public divide that we all have” (p.143). The final chapter in this section, written by Bart Wagemakers, introduces dig-writing as an analytical tool that includes the perspectives of all expedition members, explaining that “the multi perspective view includes not only the archaeological results of the campaign, but also the organization of the expedition, the relationships between people and institutes, and the experiences and impressions of the participants” (p.155). Dig-writing can thus be described as having multiple dimensions: an archaeological dimension (aims, methods, techniques), a social dimension (social networks, institutions, etc.) and an emotional dimension (reflections from individuals, ‘life at the dig camp’ etc.).

The second section of the book, titled ‘Sources and networks’, begins with Chapter 7 in which Catherine Ansoorge examines “how the efforts of a single individual can make a significant contribution to a wider field of scholarship” (p.183) by following the unusual career path of one scholar who came into Egyptology later in life and whose experiences demonstrate the different kinds of “structures in which work is carried out” (p.206). Chapter 8, by Martha Lowell Stewart, focuses on Miss Taylor, who was editor of *The Journal of Roman Studies* from 1923–1963, and who acted as a “one-woman administrative and editorial powerhouse” (p.224). Margerie Venables Taylor is an example of a person whose contributions to the field are often “underestimated and overlooked” (p.226) and yet she did it because she loved the work, stating in 1961: “It has been a happy life [...] when you get to my age, and have lived through wars, you realize that though wars come and go, work and learning do and must go on” (p.226). Joann Freed wrote Chapter 9, which looks at a different kind of battle at Carthage, a conflict between two academics characterised by attempts to undermine, written (public) attacks, etc., culminating in the dismissal of one (who later committed suicide) and the relegation of both men’s work to the margins. Life-writing, in this case, reveals “complicated human interactions, with mixed motives, philosophical, political and personal, and with repercussions that encourage disregard of archaeological data” (p.255). Chapter 10, by Tim Murray, focuses on Hugh Falconer, a scholar whose name might appear on the peripheries of others’ biographies (e.g. Darwin, Huxley) but whose biography “can provide a fresh point of access into the development of disciplines such as archaeology and palaeontology at a critical point in their histories” (p.275). In Chapter 11, Moshenska takes the social network as a unit of analysis, focusing on two men whose correspondence reveals a complex network of people and things within the world of antiquities sales in Britain in the early nineteenth century. Their exchange of information and objects underscores themes of ‘power, patronage and influence’ within the history of archaeology more broadly. To close this section, Chapter 12 by Katie Meheux is an example of life-writing

based on the security files of Vere Gordon Childe, which were collected between 1917 and 1955 by MI5 during the ‘Red Menace’ when thousands of people suspected of having communist connections were under surveillance. These files provide the details of an ‘overarching life-path or narrative’ that allows one to “track his changing beliefs, associations and networks”, aspects of his life that were “scarcely visible in his archaeological work” (p.319).

The final chapters of the volume comprise a section called ‘Reflections on practice’. The first of these is an autobiographic account by Oscar Moro Abadia, who discusses his own diaries as a source of “reflexivity in historical research”, arguing that this approach aids in understanding “both the process of writing archaeological histories and the final results” (p.332). David Gill, in Chapter 14, writes about the history of collecting with an examination of the one set of collections because “the personal choices of what to collect and display [have] influenced the way that bodies of archaeological material are received, considered and understood by the public” (p.353). Finally, to close the volume, Chapter 15 by Debbie Challis focuses on Ann Mary Severn, an artist whose work featured prominently in the work of her archaeologist husband Charles Newton. Of all the chapters, this one feels the most intimate, with Challis writing about the way the story of Mary’s life reflected and affected her own and that the “recognition of this relationship can generate greater critical reflection and a richer study of the subject, their history and the role of historical and personal memory” (p.384).

In sum, this volume is a fascinating collection of ideas that ably demonstrate the act of life-writing as a means of knowledge production. As a sociolinguist, I was heartened to see that our disciplines (still) share interests, including in contributions made by marginalised scholars, in the ways in which networks and relationships shape the history of a discipline and in the use of archival materials as fodder for scholarly investigation. The ideas and methods demonstrated by this volume’s chapters will influence my own thinking about what ‘data’ means (and where to look for it!) and how my own discipline can engage with this kind of self-reflexivity going forward. This volume had a positive impact on me, personally, and I feel it will impact others positively as well.

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