New Book Chronicle

Robert Witcher

Storytime

RUTH M. VAN DYKE & REINHARD BERNBECK (ed.). *Subjects and narratives in archaeology*. 2015. vi+299 pages, 69 b&w illustrations. Boulder: University Press of Colorado; 978-1-60732-387-7 paperback $23.95.

The books considered in this instalment of NBC raise questions about how we represent the past through words and images. In particular, five of the seven are either explicitly or implicitly biographical, exploring a diverse spectrum of lives from twentieth-century archaeologists to a governor of Roman Britain. Further, with the exception of the first book presented here, all of these titles are written and packaged for a readership extending beyond the professional archaeologist, and they provide the opportunity to consider not only how archaeological narratives are constructed but also how these are communicated.

We start with *Subjects and narratives in archaeology*, edited by VAN DYKE & BERNBECK. In their introduction, the editors assert that much is agreed upon by the contributors and, they imply, archaeologists generally: the limitations of current archaeological writing, the need to communicate with the public and the fact that the latter is best done by archaeologists rather than by journalists and novelists. Reading the papers within, however, it is unclear that the contributors really do agree on all these beliefs, let alone on how to move forward.

Only a sample of the chapters can be considered here. Tringham, as with a number of contributors, argues against linear narrative, presenting a website that allows readers to recombine fragments of data endlessly. As the editors note, however, "most of us want to weave our open-ended, fragmentary montages into some kind of larger picture" (p. 6). How do some of the other contributors go about this? Van Dyke offers a first-person narrative account of a young girl on a pilgrimage to Chaco, imagining her expectations and sensory experiences. Gibb, instead, turns to playwriting as an analytical tool. His aim is not to write a play but rather to get at the connections missed by conventional approaches. He sketches biographies and then lets his characters "take the story where they may within the constraints of their internal logic and setting" (p. 152). Gibb remains aware, nonetheless, that these characters are still *his* creation, "experiments, not statements about past events or persons" (p. 164). In the process, he asks questions such as: "how can we use imagination in a structured way?" (p. 164); he concludes that "Playwriting is merely a method for making explicit that which has long been done implicitly" (p. 165).

Adrian and Mary Praetzellis are well known for their 'Archaeologists as storytellers' conference sessions. Here, they argue that storytelling gives form and meaning to archaeological data, and that stories must have an emotional impact and a political or pedagogical purpose. Stories must also have authenticity and spark new ideas. They present a 'Docudrama' in the form of a TV chat show featuring James Deetz, Stanley South (Lewis Binford declined to appear . . .), Bill Rathje, Rosemary Joyce, Flavius Josephus and Adrian Praetzellis. The most controversial, and therefore interesting, guest is Josephus, who compares archaeologists to Jewish scholars interpreting the Torah.

The idea that the past is shaped by our imagination is pulled up short when confronted with the Holocaust. Gilead—who starts by disclosing that his relatives were killed at Treblinka—explores the 'Limits of archaeological emplotments from the perspective of excavating Nazi extermination centers'. He considers critical responses to literary representations of the Holocaust that question whether it can ever be represented because it is beyond comprehension or imagination. This raises the question of whether archaeologists can be freer with some periods and events than others, yet Gilead concludes that the Holocaust should be studied "under the same principles and by the same methods as the study of other events in human history" (p. 242). As such, he stresses that narratives must be based on

ANTIQUITY 90 350 (2016): 554–564 doi:10.15184/aqy.2016.24

archaeological information—but also notes that Nazi attempts to destroy the evidence of their crimes raise problems in this regard. In the end, however, "the most serious limit of alternative narratives is not related to science, politics, and ideology—the main limit is that most of us are not creative writers" (p. 245). In 'The archaeologist as writer', Thomas similarly isolates the same issue: talent.

Bernbeck identifies a core paradox: "The author who aims to include flesh-and-blood people in an archaeological narrative is forced to fictionalize the past" (p. 261). But "The invention of fictionalized subjects, however well meant the empathetic effort, implies a certain disrespect for past people" (p. 261). As we project our own concerns back in time, our inventions become reflections of ourselves—the same point made by Jacquetta Hawkes (1967: 174) when she observed that "Every age has the Stonehenge it deserves—or desires". Yet Bernbeck goes further: "Such instrumentalization of past peoples' subjectivities amounts to *diachronic violence*" (p. 262). Part of the problem, he argues, is that the personalisation of archaeological writing has conflated the voices of author and narrator precisely when we should be differentiating them to allow for multiple perspectives.

He turns to the principles of the *nouveau roman* as a model for archaeological writing, noting its characteristics: "fractured reality, a complex and often ruptured chronological system, the importance of a world of things, and the deliberate avoidance of protagonists with whom the reader might empathize" (p. 267). The result is "a cold, analytical gaze that refrains from flowery language and stays as descriptive and technical as possible" (p. 268)—a definition that sounds remarkably similar to the type of archaeological writing many of the contributors have set out to replace.

In the concluding chapter, 'Wrestling with truth: possibilities and peril in alternative narrative forms', professor of non-fiction writing, Sarah Pollock demonstrates that archaeologists are not the only ones struggling with the "slipperiness of truth" (p. 277). She highlights an important distinction: "Non-fiction writers imagine. Fiction writers invent. These are fundamentally different acts, performed to different ends" (p. 284). Accordingly, Pollock sounds a note of caution: "as scientists experimenting with new narrative forms, the authors [of this volume] would be wise to maintain an awareness of risk and a commitment to disclosure [. . . Archaeologists . . .] can give voice to long-passed peoples. But while such stories may be science-*based*, they are not, in and of themselves, science" (p. 284). She is particularly concerned about narratives intended for the general public, as this group is the least well trained in differentiating truth from fiction. Better communication with the public is, however, the central motivation for many of the contributors.

This is a collection strong on critique and diverse in proposed solutions. If the editors see common ground between the papers in terms of ethics and epistemology, there are also differences; for example, between a commitment to telling a good story and the desire to banish linear narrative (cf. Tringham and Praetzellis) or on the role of empathy (cf. Thomas and Bernbeck). The volume is accompanied by online features, including colour images and audio recordings linked to individual papers; some contributors could have made more use of this opportunity. The publisher could also have provided a more user-friendly URL than: http://www.upcolorado.com/component/k2/item/2712-subjects-and-narratives-in-archaeology-media.

Biography

DOROTHY U. SEYLER. *The obelisk and the Englishman: the pioneering discoveries of Egyptologist William Bankes*. 2015. 304 pages, 29 colour and 40 b&w illustrations. Amherst (NY): Prometheus; 978-1-63388-036-8 hardback $26.

ALAN KAISER. *Archaeology, sexism, and scandal: the long-suppressed story of one woman's discoveries and the man who stole credit for them*. 2015. xx+251 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. London: Rowman & Littlefield; 978-1-4422-3003-3 hardback £22.95.

NATALIA VOGEIKOFF-BROGAN, JACK L. DAVIS & VASILIKI FLOROU (ed.). *Carl W. Blegen: personal & archaeological narratives*. 2015. xii+240 pages, 85 colour and b&w illustrations. Exeter: University of Exeter Press; 978-1-937040-22-0 hardback £25.

Subjects and narratives was primarily academic and analytical, identifying problems and sketching solutions; our remaining review books seek—and arguably will find—wider audiences, putting into practice a range

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of narrative techniques. We start with a conventional biography of an unconventional life, and then move through increasingly experimental forms of biography—as critique, fiction and travel.

First, *The obelisk and the Englishman: the pioneering discoveries of Egyptologist William Bankes* by DOROTHY SEYLER. William Bankes certainly led a busy and varied life—aristocrat, adventurer, archaeologist, MP, art collector and, eventually, outlaw. Despite the book's title, this is primarily a biography of Bankes rather than his discoveries *per se*. It is not, for example, another account of the decipherment of hieroglyphs or the birth of Egyptology more generally. Instead, Seyler traces Bankes's life from his early years as the second son of a wealthy Dorset landowner, through his extensive Mediterranean travels, to his fall from grace and exile in Venice.

Fortunately—for our purposes, at least—the best-documented years of his life concern his travels and work in the Near East and Egypt. After Cambridge and his first stint as an MP, Bankes set off to Spain in 1813; he did not return to England until 1820. During these years, he travelled from Spain via Italy to the Eastern Mediterranean, exploring Greece, Crete, Cyprus, Palestine, Syria, Turkey and, most famously, Egypt, where the monuments he saw caused him to muse that "the Greeks and Romans whom we have been content to acknowledge our superiors in the greatness and [. . .] solidity of their monuments have gained not a step upon their predecessors" (p. 88). An accomplished artist, he drew monuments and copied inscriptions and paintings wherever he went. And he travelled to many places unvisited by other European travellers. We hear, for example, how he managed to charm his way, along with a motley crew of others including John Burckhardt, to the fabled Nabataean city of Petra. He also got himself into plenty of scrapes: personal disputes (including with the redoubtable Lady Hester in Damascus—the pair loathed one another), debilitating illnesses and, at one point, being abandoned naked by guides in the desert.

But it was his two extended journeys down the Nile that are his most important legacy. Many of the temples, tombs and inscriptions he documented have subsequently been lost, making his records unique. He published relatively little himself, however, and one has a sense of a life overshadowed by those around him, most obviously Belzoni, Champollion, Burckhardt, Byron and Wellington. Indeed, much of what we know of his travels comes not from Bankes's diaries—he did not keep one—but from the diaries and books of his friends and associates.

Seyler suggest that Bankes "let himself fall into the trap of trying to do a little bit of everything" (p. 220), with the result that he never got round to publishing his copious notes and drawings. Others, however, were keener—or at least more disciplined—to publish discoveries that Bankes had made, leading to a number of disputes and a long-running libel case that Bankes eventually lost (more on academic theft anon). From his first visit to Egypt, Bankes demonstrated a particular fascination with the temple of Isis on the island of Philae. It was a bilingual obelisk from this temple that, along with the Rosetta Stone, would provide the key to deciphering hieroglyphs. The obelisk was eventually transported to Bankes's family home, Kingston Lacy in Dorset, where it still stands today. This personal appropriation is, however, differentiated by Seyler from the exportation of other obelisks on the grounds that it had already fallen; Bankes "would never have dreamed of taking down any of the standing monuments at these temples" (p. 183). Despite its prominence in the book's title, we do not get much of a 'biography' of the obelisk. Seyler certainly laments the fact that we lack many of the details we might have liked to have had about it; for example, its journey to England. Nonetheless, there is little feel for the material object itself or, indeed, for the political and cultural mess that accumulated around the man, Belzoni, who facilitated its export.

Bankes's fall and exile resulted from being caught and charged not once but twice for indecent exposure. The first time, London society, including his friend Wellington, rallied around him to ensure his acquittal. The second time, they did not and he fled, finally settling in Venice. From there he continued to commission and buy art for his Dorset home, carefully choreographing the location of each piece in the house. He may even have risked a covert visit to Kingston Lacy towards the end of his life, to view his collection *in situ*.

Seyler has written a welcome account of a pivotal character in the emergence of Egyptology. The narrative unfolds well, and Seyler refrains from attempts to understand Bankes's complicated later life by psychoanalysing his early years or his relationship with his father. If Bankes is sometimes crowded out of his own biography by a digression on Keates, Wellington or Byron (who appears at least three times as Bryon himself), that is probably true to the man.

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In *Archaeology, sexism, and scandal: the long-suppressed story of one woman's discoveries and the man who stole credit for them*, ALAN KAISER presents a cross between biography, autobiography and detective novel. The story begins one rainy afternoon when Kaiser, bored with marking essays, resorts to displacement activity: office tidying. In the process, he discovers a file of documents donated to the Classics department at the University of Evansville, Indiana, concerning American excavations at the Greek site of Olynthus in 1931. This project, directed by David Robinson, occupies an important position in the history of Classical archaeology—due to the scale of the excavations, their emphasis on private rather than public architecture, and the still invaluable series of excavation reports published by Robinson and his collaborators. In just four seasons, the project uncovered over 100 houses and 600 graves, employing hundreds of workmen (as many as 350, p. 43) and eventually publishing 14 monographs totalling some 4500 pages. Might the file found by Kaiser cast new light on this important project?

The contents, he soon discovers, relate to one of Robinson's students, Mary Ross Ellingson. Part 1 of the book presents an account of Ellingson's 1931 journey across the Atlantic to join the Johns Hopkins University excavations. Her letters home provide a wonderful insight into her experiences of Greek culture and both the social and professional aspects of the excavation. It is hard not to warm to Ellingson's youthful enthusiasm and sense of fun—everything is 'marvellous', a 'scream'. But there is also rich ethnographic detail on the subject of Greece at a time of dramatic social and ethnic upheaval, involving not only Turks and Greeks but also Vlachs. Kaiser suggests she may even have used some of her experience of daily life in the village of Myriophito to inform her understanding of the archaeological evidence for spinning and agriculture.

Part 2, 'Sexism and scholarship', shifts gear from biography to an account of the social and academic context within which women such as Ellingson found themselves during the early 1930s, explaining how sexist attitudes and the tenure system actively worked against their chances of achieving full professorships. Kaiser then recounts the life and career of Ellingson after her participation in the Olynthus excavation, and those of two of her female co-workers. Despite the institutional discrimination they faced, each followed a different career route and all of them eventually achieved some level of academic recognition. The male archaeologists who excavated at Olynthus in 1931 generally went on to achieve even greater things. Having discovered more about the excavations and about the difficulties faced by women in archaeology at the time, Kaiser is about to put the file back on the shelf when he spots a brief comment on an administrative form completed by Ellingson, decades after the excavation.

As the book is presented as a detective story, one does not want to spoil the surprise. The book's title, however, clearly pre-empts the plot. Kaiser discovers that one of the monographs is plagiarised, from Ellingson's dissertation. Part 3 presents the evidence and attempts to understand whether this action was considered acceptable academic behaviour at the time and what it might indicate given that Robinson worked hard to train and promote his own students—both men and women—and their work. Kaiser argues that it related in part to Robinson's belief (common at the time, as Kaiser demonstrates) that once married, women such as Ellingson (who is here described under her married name) would leave the field.

The final chapter takes an autobiographical turn as Kaiser relates his own difficulties in getting an article about his findings on this matter published. Despite attracting much interest on the lecture circuit, he begins to smell a rat after receiving 11 rejections based on over two dozen anonymous reviews. Could it be that Robinson's many former students were now acting as gatekeepers, protecting their former teacher's reputation? Possibly, although the scale of conspiracy seems improbable. More significant, perhaps, is that several of the reviewers alleged that Robinson had plagiarised not just Ellingson's work but the work of other students too. In other words, this kind of behaviour was just par for the course. Undeterred, indeed emboldened, Kaiser presents us with a book-length treatment, one that he hopes will encourage Classical archaeology to confront its past complicity with sexist attitudes, its conservatism inculcated through patronage, and its tacit acceptance of plagiarism.

Kaiser's blend of biography, critique and autobiography, all wrapped up in a detective novel, flows well. The volume is richly illustrated throughout with black and white photographs of the people, places, documents and events narrated—the reproduction quality, however, is disappointing and the location map (fig. I.3) is lamentable. Nonetheless, Kaiser makes the events surrounding the excavation and

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

publication of Olynthus speak to the struggles of women in archaeology during much of the twentieth century.

Our next biography, also of an American excavating in Greece during the 1930s, adopts yet another format: *Carl W. Blegen: personal & archaeological narratives*, edited by VOGEIKOFF-BROGAN, DAVIS and FLOROU. Blegen excavated at sites across Greece and Turkey, including Nemea and Troy, but it was his 1939 discovery of a Mycenaean complex—the so-called Palace of Nestor—with its archive of Linear B tablets that sealed his reputation. Unlike contemporaries, including Sir Arthur Evans (A.J.E.), Blegen has not previously received any biographical treatment. But this book is not a biography in the traditional sense, that is, a single author with a single narrative arc, but rather 10 individual papers authored by different scholars. Nonetheless, the editors suggest that the chapters form "a coherent whole that may be read from cover to cover" (p. 2). Arranged in roughly chronological order, the chapters trace Blegen's journey from the USA to Greece, his parting of company with the American School in Athens, his establishment of an "independent salon" (p. 5) and his work at key Aegean sites.

A recurrent theme is the academic dispute between Sir Arthur Evans and Blegen (with his collaborator, Alan Wace, Director of the British School at Athens) over whether developments on Mainland Greece were the result of cultural domination, or even conquest, by Minoan Crete, or—as Blegen and Wace contended—independent. This theme forms the focus of the chapter by Galanakis, which describes how the battle played out in private correspondence and in print, including a 1940 *Antiquity* paper by Wace that the author indicates, in a letter to Blegen, was intended to "demolish the views of A.J.E" (p. 70). But it was the discovery of the Linear B tablets at the Palace of Nestor that seemed to provide Blegen with the clinching evidence, even if Evans moved quickly to publish a letter in *The Times* announcing the discovery of a 'Minoan' palace. Wace and Blegen meanwhile exchanged letters expressing their hope that the tablets would turn out to be Greek not Minoan and thus deal the final blow to Evans's position. That hope was subsequently vindicated by the decipherment of the script. The distinctiveness of mainland Greece from Crete finally established, Mycenaean archaeology could develop as a distinct sub-discipline.

The chapter by Davis views the discovery of the palace from a different perspective. Given that the potential significance of the site had been identified over a decade earlier, why, he asks, did it take so long for Blegen (or anyone else) to investigate? There is no single answer, but politics, money and reputations come into the equation. A particular obstacle appears to have been Edward Capps of the American School, with whom there was clearly friction (incidentally, Capps also turns up in Kaiser's book, attempting to set a quota on the number of women studying at the School; an interesting subject for another biography?).

Blegen is best known for the Palace of Nestor, but he worked on many other sites. Rose presents an overview of Blegen's work at Troy, where he helped to establish a firm chronology for the site. Rose reviews Blegen's contributions and how subsequent work has revised some of his conclusions, in particular, Blegen's belief that Troy VIIa was the Homeric city attacked by the Greeks. Instead, Rose suggests that the literary city became associated with the physical site, perhaps as early as the eighth century BC, not only because it matched Homer's description, but also because the extant citadel walls were the most dominant Late Bronze Age remains of the region.

Another interesting chapter is offered by Karadimas, who examines the 'Excavations at the Palace of Nestor as seen in the Greek and foreign press'. This demonstrates that, although Blegen was less media-savvy than Schliemann or Evans, he was engaged with newspaper editors and concerned with ensuring the accuracy of the reports. There is also a fascinating discussion of how the illustrator Alan Sorrell was commissioned to produce a reconstruction of the palace; the image, reproduced as fig. 5 in Karadimas's chapter, is classic Sorrell, but it was never included in Blegen's final report as further work rendered some detail inaccurate (more on reconstruction drawings anon).

In their introduction, the editors comment that "Blegen had a real sense of the significance of his own life, which he recorded in minute detail" (p. 2). After the stylings of the self-effacing Bankes, did I really want to read on? In fact, I warmed to Blegen. For example, in the chapter by Fappas, which explores his friendship and collaboration with Wace (as seen through their correspondence) one gets a sense of his humour such as in their joking exchange about what to name a planned collaborative book: "*Collectanea Prehistorica Bilgica*" (pp. 78–79).

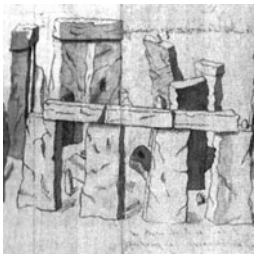
https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Although the editors suggest that this book may be of interest to "lay audiences" (p. 2), it is presented in a more scholarly style than those of Seyler or Kaiser. It also lacks an overarching narrative that not only links, but also extracts a story from, the different events of Blegen's life; the book's plural subtitle, *Personal and archaeological narratives*, is therefore entirely appropriate. It is illustrated with well-reproduced black and white photographs and, most especially, the splendid, colour portraits by Piet De Jong of both Blegen and Evans.

Autobiography and travel

RUTH SCURR. *John Aubrey: my own life*. 522 pages. 2015. London: Chatto & Windus; 978-0-7011-7907-6 hardback £25.

BRONWEN RILEY. *Journey to Britannia: from the heart of Rome to Hadrian's Wall, AD 130*. 2015. 335 pages, 7 b&w illustrations. London: Head of Zeus; 978-1-78185-134-0 hardback £25.



From biography to autobiography. Or, more precisely, two experimental approaches to auto-biography that engage directly with some of the issues of authority, storytelling and fiction raised in *Subjects and narratives*. First is *John Aubrey: my own life* by RUTH SCURR. Straightaway one might object that a book about one person by another is biography not autobiography. But as the jacket blurb proclaims, this book is "genre-defying". The book is an experiment in writing biography in the form of an imagined diary. The subject is John Aubrey, a key figure not only in antiquarianism ("the first English archaeologist" p. 427), but also a number of other areas including—not coincidentally—biography. Aubrey's life spanned turbulent times—the Civil War, the Restoration, the Glorious Revolution, plague and the Great Fire of London. Against this backdrop, Aubrey sought to document and preserve the stories and monuments of England's past.

Aubrey lived in a pre-disciplinary world and was fascinated with everything around him. Influenced by figures such as Francis Bacon and William Camden, he collected notes on natural history, folklore and scientific observations; he visited and documented monuments and collected objects; he was enamoured of astrology. Much akin to William Bankes, Aubrey was so busy with these interests that he found no time to keep a diary, and his life must therefore be reconstructed almost entirely through his correspondence. But as Scurr observes, "When I was searching for a biographical form that would suit the remnants of his life, I realised that he would all but vanish inside a conventional biography, crowded out by his friends, acquaintances and their multitudinous interests" (p. 11). The solution is a fictionalised journal ("No-one gets crowded out of his or her own diary" p. 12), which draws, where possible, on Aubrey's own words—updated for the modern ear—and interpolates around them. Scurr explains: "I have not invented scenes or relationships for him as a novelist would, but neither have I followed the conventions of traditional biography. When he is silent, I do not speculate about where he was or what he was doing or thinking" (p. 13). The concept briefly sketched, Scurr (or rather Aubrey) begins his diary in 1634: "I was born [. . .]" (p. 17).

For archaeologists, Aubrey is best remembered for his observations about a monument close to his childhood home: Stonehenge. The site unsurprisingly features several times, with Aubrey remarking that: "it must be possible to count and number the stones. I will do so one day" (p. 24) and "I have returned to Stonehenge and discovered some new holes" (p. 143)—the latter, of course, subsequently named after him. Aubrey was also one of the first to reject the idea that Stonehenge was a Roman temple (although the Romans "would have been delighted with the stateliness and grandeur of it" pp. 143–44). Of course, all of these observations have been well worked over by historians of archaeology already, and here, scattered across entries spanning decades, we do not find any direct new insights into the monuments he visited. What we do get, however, is an appreciation of how Aubrey's fascination with these sites sat alongside his other passions—natural history, astrology, geology and so on.

Although best known for his work at Stonehenge, he visited many other sites including the Roman town of Silchester, noting cropmarks, and the stones at Avebury that "rival the ones I have known since childhood at Stonehenge" (p. 75). He even guided Charles II around Avebury in

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

order to promote the site's protection. Other sites, however, did not fare so well. Of the 'Roman temple' at Blackheath, Aubrey laments: "What a pity a drawing of the temple was not taken some hundred years ago. Posterity would have been grateful!" p. 222). A concluding chapter, 'Aubrey's afterlife', tracks his legacy, built on his collection of papers and artefacts donated to the Ashmolean Museum.

As flagged in Scurr's introduction, the text is full of gaps and unevenness in the attention paid to particular topics. It is a book of fragments. But it also works as a coherent narrative, drawing the reader along with Aubrey's insatiable curiosity. Flow is maintained by banishing references to the endnotes, which are listed by page to avoid in-text citation. Even so, it is not always easy to work out exactly where Aubrey ends and Scurr begins. Does it matter? The answer is presumably contextual. As a story about Aubrey's life, it is highly readable. As a traditional biography or as a source of information about Aubrey's life, it must be treated more cautiously. Most importantly, the format is eminently suited to the subject and his own philosophy of knowledge and life.

Scurr ponders whether "we honour or betray the dead when we write about them" (p. 12) —this very question was raised in the first volume considered here. She offers no explicit answer, but her admiration, even fondness, of her subject matter (described as "wonderful company" p. 10) suggests that she believes the former. She continues: "Aubrey's approach to his own and other lives was imaginative and empirical in equal measure. In imagining his diary by collating the evidence, I have echoed the idea of antiquities—the searching after remnants—that meant so much to him [. . .] I have done so playingly [. . .] but with purpose" (p. 13).

Our next 'biography' also creatively experiments with the genre and strays into territory well worn by archaeological feet. In *Journey to Britannia: from the heart of Rome to Hadrian's Wall, AD 130*, Bronwen Riley narrates the journey of the incoming governor of the Roman province of Britannia, Sextus Julius Severus, as he travels from the city of Rome, via Gaul, to the empire's northern frontier: Hadrian's Wall. That journey, as seen through the eyes of Severus, might be considered biographical and—as we also travel with the governor, experiencing the same sights, sounds and smells—perhaps even autobiographical.

Across ten chapters, we travel from Rome, via Ostia and Lyon, crossing the Channel from Boulogne and arriving at Richborough. The year is AD 130, chosen because it provides an unusually full *dramatis personae* of known individuals for Roman Britain—even if they largely remain names. The core chapters focus on the journey from Richborough via the provincial capital, London, to the *civitas* capitals at Silchester and Wroxeter, the spa-town of Bath and the legionary fortresses at Caerleon and Chester, and up to Hadrian's Wall.

The introduction, 'Evoking the past', spells out Riley's aims and methods. Her ambition is "to capture the flavour of life" (p. 15) in Roman Britain. She rightly states, however, that in order to understand Roman Britain, we first have to know something about Rome itself. Hence Severus starts his journey in the Roman Forum (although Riley concedes that we do not know whether he travelled from Rome or somewhere else to take up his gubernatorial responsibilities). Situating an imagined journey at a specific moment in time presents advantages and disadvantages. It avoids the creation of 'time-less' travellers, able to experience people and events separated by centuries. Equally, however, it exposes just how patchy our evidence is—even from such a well-studied case as Roman Britain. Thus, there are holes to be avoided, or filled with archaeological evidence from elsewhere or with insights from the Classical texts. Although the latter may assume too much similarity between the Mediterranean and frontier provinces, Riley is generally good at contrasting Britain with other parts of the Empire, portraying a place rather less familiar than often assumed.

Arriving in London, Riley describes the scene: "Looking left, upstream from the bridge, where the mouth of the River Walbrook meets the Thames, there are extensive quays lined with stone warehouses and jetties. Downstream, east of the bridge, the port is expanding rapidly, with masonry as well as timber-framed stores, warehouses and shops alongside the quay and set back from it" (p. 93).

The 'p-word' is never uttered although there are obvious links here to the phenomenological studies most closely associated with British prehistory. In fact, there is greater resemblance to the work of Classical archaeologists writing imagined journeys, comprehensively elaborated by Diane Favro (1996) and that run parallel to, and exhibit little cross-reference with, phenomenology. None of these studies, however, was Riley's point of departure.

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Rather, her inspiration—as series editor of the English Heritage Red Guides—was the reconstruction drawings in site guidebooks that "help to breathe life" (p. 305) into the past (on which topic, more shortly).

As hinted already, Riley's approach presents the quandary of what to do with archaeological knowledge that was not accessible to her protagonists. In this case, as omniscient narrator, she tells us about what's hidden in a pot at the bottom of a well at Silchester ("a regular witch's brew" p. 121) or the fate of buildings (redecoration, demolition and so on) in the years after AD 130. As the reader is not really expected to suspend their disbelief and imagine that they are actually in Roman Britain, this privileged information is welcome. Indeed, it is the time-travelling component that occasionally trips the reader; when Riley starts a sentence 'Today, [. . .]', does she mean now or then?

Riley's biography-travelogue is neither fiction nor non-fiction. As with Scurr's book, it blurs the boundaries. For those concerned about policing such things, in the final accounting it falls on the side of non-fiction. Does it work? Certainly not as a novel, not least because Riley is too concerned to document her evidence, and the combination of numbered endnotes and additional footnotes using a hotchpotch of symbols is distracting. Equally however, to maintain the flow, some of the material is quickly passed over, but this simply whets the appetite—what is the basis for this particular detail? Having been tempted to consult the endnotes, the reader's task is complicated by a misalignment between the running head and the reference numbers.

If we cannot easily classify this book as either fiction or non-fiction, it is surely wrong to judge it by the standards of either. An 'evocation' is perhaps the best term for it. It is well researched, accessibly written and full of fascinating detail about Roman Britain. It is also interesting to compare Riley's imagined narrative with Scurr's. I was more tempted to check the endnotes provided by Riley, perhaps encouraged by the superscript references, but perhaps also because we have moved decisively to the archaeological. Are we seeing the ethical and epistemological differences between biography and archaeology; between historical texts and material culture; and between telling a good story and staying close to the evidence? Juxtaposed, these books raise questions about disciplinarity, authority and narrative.

More than words

SHEELAGH HUGHES. *Illustrating the past: archaeological discoveries on Irish road schemes* (TII Heritage 1). 2015. vi+122 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Dublin: Transport Infrastructure Ireland; 978-0-9932315-1-3 hardback.

We conclude with a volume that moves beyond words and focuses on images. Over the past decade and a half, investment in Ireland's transport infrastructure has resulted in unprecedented archaeological investigations. On the basis of this work, the National Roads Authority—now merged with the Railway Procurement Agency and rebranded as Transport Infrastructure Ireland, or TII—has produced an impressive series of 28 monographs. *Illustrating the past* by SHEELAGH HUGHES draws together some of the work by artists featured in those monographs to explore both the richness of Ireland's past and the diverse ways in which it has been visualised. The result, attractively packaged as an album, includes drawings, paintings and computer reconstructions organised chronologically from the Mesolithic to the early medieval period.

Each image is paired with a page of commentary on the general archaeological significance of each site, explaining the specific scene illustrated; there are also site plans, photographs and info-boxes. We visit a Middle Bronze Age 'sweathouse' and observe a seemingly experimental attempt at iron production at an Early Iron Age site; we witness a Late Neolithic pilgrimage to a timber circle and a night-time ritual at an Iron Age post enclosure; and we imagine how a piece of a Late Bronze Age wheel (the earliest so far discovered in Ireland) is incorporated into a wooden trackway, as well as attending several cremations and inhumations.

The variety of methods and results is extremely interesting: black-ink line drawings, watercolour washes and photo-realistic computer images; full colour palettes, pastel shades and monochrome. Some artists draw by hand, some generate images with software and some blend different media. There are also different perspectives: aerial views and the vantage points of individuals within the landscape; cut-away

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

views allow us to see inside some structures, while others are closed to us.

Juxtaposed in this way, it is difficult not to judge the effectiveness of the different styles. Some of the garishly coloured examples have a cartoonish, computer-game quality that I did not find particularly attractive. The photorealistic images are certainly seductive but somehow not as a compelling as the line drawings and the watercolour washes. But as with the books discussed above, different visualisation techniques are presumably more or less appropriate for different purposes—a display panel on-site or in a museum, on-screen or printed—as well as linked to a specific aim: to evoke a general impression, to capture a specific event or moment, or to depict a wide landscape, a single site or even a single artefact.

These images, we are told, are "not mere conjecture [. . .] They reflect the limits of the excavated evidence but also seek to imaginatively extend it in a meaningful and plausible fashion" (p. 3). The variety of techniques shows that there is more than one way to do this, and, although there is no extended exploration of this issue, or synthesis crosscutting the individual examples, the book concludes with short profiles of the artists and summaries of their individual working practices and philosophies.

Dave Pollock, for example, notes "Every reconstruction is wrong and to limit my part in the deception I tend to avoid detail" (p. 105). Others strive "to 'recreate' the sites as they may once have looked" (p. 100), adding texture, people and environmental detail. This diversity is reflected in the range of terminology used: reconstructions, visualisations, translations and interpretive creations.

All the artists talk about their collaboration or dialogue with archaeologists, anchoring themselves in the detail of excavation reports, but—as one of the artists, Dan Tietzsch-Tyler, remarks—"After that it is down to my imagination" (p. 106). This is perhaps a fitting note on which to ponder not only this excellent and thought-provoking volume but also the other books reviewed here, each engaging with the evidence and then finding imaginative ways to create narratives about the past.

References

FAVRO, D. 1996. *The urban image of Augustan Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

HAWKES, J. 1967. God in the machine. *Antiquity* 41: 174–80. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00033202.

WACE, A.B. 1940. The Treasury of Atreus. *Antiquity* 14: 233–49. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00015234.

Books received

This list includes all books received between 1 November and 31 December 2015. Those featuring at the beginning of New Book Chronicle have, however, not been duplicated in this list. The listing of a book in this chronicle does not preclude its subsequent review in *Antiquity*.

General

RUTH M. VAN DYKE (ed.). 2015. *Practicing materiality*. 224 pages, several b&w illustrations. Tucson: University Press of Arizona; 978-0-8165-3127-1 paperback $34.95.

COLIN RENFREW & PAUL BAHN. 2016. *Archaeology: theories, methods and practice* (seventh edition). 672 pages, 800 colour illustrations. London: Thames & Hudson; 978-0-500-29210-5 paperback £32.

European pre- and protohistory

BRUNO BIZOT & GÉRARD SAUZADE (directeurs), YANN ARDAGNA, JACQUES ÉLIE BROCHIER, JACQUES BUISSON-CATIL, ISABELLE DORAY, JEAN-BAPTISTE FOURVEL, AURORE LAMBERT, FRÉDÉRIC MAGNIN & SOPHIE MARTIN. 2015. *Le dolmen de l'Ubac à Goult (Vaucluse). Archéologie, environnement et évolution des gestes funéraires dans un contexte stratifié* (Mémoires de la Société préhistorique française 61). 248 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Paris: Société préhistorique française; 2-913745-61-X paperback €30.

CATHERINE FRIEMAN & BERIT VALENTIN ERIKSEN (ed.). 2015. *Flint daggers in prehistoric Europe*. viii+165 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Oxford: Oxbow; 978-1-78570-018-7 hardback £40.

JIM LEARY. 2015. *The remembered land: surviving sea-level rise after the last Ice Age*. 164 pages, 10 b&w illustrations. London & New York: Bloomsbury; 978-1-47424-591-3 paperback £14.99.

HARALD MELLER, HELGE WOLFGANG ARZ, REINHARD JUNG & ROBERTO RISCH (ed.). 2015. *2200 BC—Ein Klimasturz als Ursache für den Zerfall der Alten Welt? 2200 BC—a climatic breakdown as a cause for the collapse of the old world? (7. Mitteldeutscher Archäologentag vom 17. bis 26. Oktober 2013)*. 861 pages (2 volumes), numerous colour and b&w

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

illustrations, tables. Halle: Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt; 978-3-944507-29-3 hardback €109.

Annet Nieuwhof. 2015. *Eight human skulls in a dung heap and more: ritual practice in the terp region of the northern Netherlands 600 BC–AD 300* (Groningen Archaeological Studies 29). 447 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, tables. Groningen: Barkhuis and University of Groningen Library; 978–9491431845 hardback €63.60.

Maria Pilar Prieto Martínez & Laure Salanova (ed.). 2015. *The Bell Beaker transition in Europe: mobility and local evolution during the 3rd millennium BC*. viii+214 pages, several colour and numerous b&w illustrations. Oxford & Havertown (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78297-927-2 hardback £38.

The Roman world

Barbara E. Borg (ed.). 2015. *A companion to Roman art*. xxv+637 pages, 15 colour and numerous b&w illustrations. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell; 978-1-4051-9288-0 hardback £140.

Jem Duducu. 2015. *The Romans in 100 facts*. 192 pages. Stroud: Amberley; 978-1-4456-4970-2 paperback £7.99.

Janet Huskinson. 2015. *Roman strigillated sarcophagi*. xv+349 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, tables. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-920324-6 hardback £75.

John Lund. 2015. *A study of the circulation of ceramics in Cyprus from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD* (Gösta Enbom Monographs 5). 390 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 978-87-7124-450-2 hardback £49.69.

Anatolia, Levant, Middle East

Pedro Azara. 2015. *Cornerstone: the birth of the city in Mesopotamia* (first published 2012; translated by Jeffrey Swartz). 117 pages. Chicago (IL): University of Chicago Press; 978-84-939231-7-4 paperback £13.50.

André Lemaire. 2015. *Levantine epigraphy and history in the Achaemenid period (539–322 BCE)*. xiv+137 pages, 90 b&w illustrations. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-726589-5 hardback £35.

Africa and Egypt

Charlotte Booth. 2015. *In bed with the ancient Egyptians*. 288 pages, 44 colour illustrations. Stroud: Amberley; 978-1-4456-4343-4 hardback £20.

Gene Kritsky. 2015. *The tears of Re: beekeeping in ancient Egypt*. x+133 pages, several colour and numerous b&w illustrations. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-936138-0 hardback £19.99.

J.D. Lewis-Williams. 2015. *Myth and meaning: San-Bushman folklore in global context*. 249 pages, 12 colour and several b&w illustrations. Walnut Creek (CA): Left Coast; 978-1-62958-154-5 hardback £79.

Stephen Quirke. 2015. *Exploring religion in ancient Egypt*. viii+271 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell; 978-1-4443-3199-8 paperback £22.99.

Americas

Anna S. Agbe-Davies. 2015. *Tobacco, pipes, and race in colonial Virginia: little tubes of mighty power*. 246 pages, numerous b&w illustrations, 16 tables. Walnut Creek (CA): Left Coast; 978-1-61132-396-2 paperback £34.95.

Richard L. Burger & Lucy C. Salazar (ed.). 2012. *The 1912 Yale Peruvian scientific expedition collections from Machu Picchu. Metal artifacts* (Yale University Publications in Anthropology 91). xiv+314 pages, 11 colour and numerous b&w illustrations, 23 tables. New Haven (CT) & London: Yale University Press; 978-0-913516-27-0 paperback $69.95.

Lynn Gamble. 2015. *First coastal Californians*. x+132 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press; 978-1-938645-19-8 paperback £24.95.

Joan M. Gero. 2015. *Yutopian: archaeology, ambiguity, and the production of knowledge in northwest Argentina*. xxv+367 pages, 134 b&w illustrations, 25 tables. Austin: University of Texas Press; 978-0-292-77202-1 paperback $27.95.

Cynthia Kristan-Graham & Laura M. Amrhein (ed.). 2015. *Memory traces: analyzing sacred space at five Mesoamerican sites*. xxx+231 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Boulder: University Press of Colorado; 978-60732-376-1 hardback £65.

Alfredo López Austin. 2015. *The myth of Quetzalcoatl: religion, rulership, and history in the Nahua world* (translated by Russ Davidson & Guilhem Olivier). xx+229 pages, 8 b&w illustrations, 6 tables. Boulder: University Press of Colorado; 978-1-60732-390-7 paperback $32.95.

Damien B. Marken & James L. Fitzsimmons (ed.). 2015. *Classic Maya polities of the southern lowlands: integration, interaction, dissolution*. 272 pages, 54 b&w illustrations. Boulder: University Press of Colorado; 978-1-60732-412-6 hardback £46.

David J. Meltzer. 2015. *The great Paleolithic war: how science forged an understanding of America's Ice Age past*. xix+670 pages, 18 b&w illustrations, 9 tables. Chicago (IL): University of Chicago Press; 978-0-226-29322-6 hardback £38.50.

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ANDREW K. SCHERER. 2015. *Mortuary landscapes of the Classic Maya: rituals of body and soul*. xiv+291 pages, 19 colour and 99 b&w illustrations. Austin: University of Texas Press; 978-1-4773-0051-0 hardback £45.

JUSTINE M. SHAW (ed.). 2015. *The Maya of the Cochuah region: archaeological and ethnographic perspectives on the northern lowlands*. xv+328 pages, numerous illustrations, 7 tables. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press; 978-0-8263-4864-7 hardback $85.

Britain and Ireland

PETER HALKON, MARTIN MILLETT & HELEN WOODHOUSE (ed.). 2015. *Hayton, East Yorkshire: archaeological studies of the Iron Age and Roman landscapes. Volumes 1 & 2* (Yorkshire Archaeological Report 7). xix+588 pages, numerous b&w illustrations & tables. Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society; 978-0-9932383-2-1 paperback £30.

DENNIS HARDING. 2016. *Death and burial in Iron Age Britain*. xv+328 pages, 65 b&w illustrations. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-968756-5 hardback £70.

RONALD HUTTON. 2016. *Physical evidence for ritual acts, sorcery and witchcraft in Christian Britain: a feeling for magic*. xiii+261 pages, several b&w illustrations. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan; 978-1-137-44481-3 hardback £63.

VANESSA OAKDEN. 2015. *50 Finds from Cheshire: objects from the Portable Antiquities Scheme*. 94 pages, 180 colour illustrations. Stroud: Amberley; 978-1-4456-4690-9 paperback £14.99.

PETER WOODMAN. 2015. *Ireland's first settlers: time and the Mesolithic*. xii+366 pages, 32 colour and numerous b&w illustrations. Oxford & Havertown (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78297-778-0 hardback £50.

Byzantine, early medieval and medieval

SHARON E.J. GERSTEL. 2016. *Rural lives and landscapes in Late Byzantium: art, archaeology, and ethnography*. xvii+207 pages, 90 colour and 34 b&w illustrations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 978-0-521-85159-6 hardback £70.

Heritage, conservation & museums

SEAN A. KINGSLEY. 2016. *Fishing and shipwreck heritage: marine archaeology's greatest threat?* xvii+152 pages, several b&w illustrations. London & New York: Bloomsbury; 978-1-47257-362-5 hardback £45.

SILVIA PAÏN. 2015. *Manuel de gestion du mobilier archéologique. Méthodologie et pratiques*. 233 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme; 978-2-7351-1762-8 paperback €40.

Other

MADHUVANTI GHOSE (ed.). 2015. *Gates of the Lord: the tradition of Krishna paintings*. 176 pages, 170 colour and 19 b&w illustrations. Ahmedabad: Mapin; 978-93-85360-05-3 hardback $45.

PAUL A. RAHE. 2016. *The grand strategy of Classical Sparta: the Persian challenge*. xiv+408 pages, 27 b&w illustrations. New Haven (CT) & London: Yale University Press; 978-0-300-11642-7 hardback £25.

THOMAS SCANLON. 2015. *Greek historiography*. xii+352 pages. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell; 978-1-4051-4522-0 hardback £45.

R. WATERFIELD. 2016. *Hellenistic lives including Alexander the Great by Plutarch*. xxx+525 pages, several b&w illustrations. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 978-0-19-966433-7 paperback £12.99.

https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.24 Published online by Cambridge University Press