

## Responses to the *Archaeology for the People* Questionnaire

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### Question 1:

*What is your favorite book or article about archaeology that is accessible to a non-specialized audience? Why?*

**Brian Fagan:** I don't really have a favorite, for there are very few books or articles that are free of the increasingly specialized scholarship of archaeology. At a serious level, I think that Cyprian Broodbank's *The Making of the Middle Sea* (2013) is a lovely, beautifully written essay that is truly multidisciplinary. At a more popular compass, Francis Pryor's books like *Britain B.C.* (2003) and *Britain A.D.* (2004) are wonderfully conversational, yet written by a really good archaeologist. They have, of course, a UK and European slant. I hate to say this, but Jared Diamond's books, although provocative, are not well written and are often downright turgid. There are, of course, numerous other titles, but these are just suggestions. I think anyone contemplating popular archaeology writing should peruse issues of *Archaeology* magazine and *Current Archaeology*.

**Colin Renfrew:** My favorite book about archaeology remains *Gods, Graves and Scholars*, by C. W. Ceram, first published in 1949, and still in print. I understand that it has sold five million copies. I read it shortly after it was published and it seemed then, and still does, to conjure up the romance of archaeology.

**Alfredo González-Ruibal:** Without a doubt, James Deetz's *In Small Things Forgotten* (1977). He managed to write a text that is thought-provoking,

empirically rich and sophisticated, and at the same time accessible to the wider public (as proved by his 512 ratings and 34 reviews in goodreads.com), thanks to its clarity and literary style. One can say that it is easier to craft an interesting story doing historical archaeology rather than prehistoric. There is a truth to it. But what is remarkable about this book is that, unlike a lot of historical archaeology, the narrative is guided by artifacts, not by texts. It is pure archaeology and immensely readable.

**Marilyn Johnson:** I was very taken with the short book *In Small Things Forgotten* by James Deetz and have returned to it several times. It manages to be both evocative and informative, and in its small, focused, particular way, reminds us that archaeology fills in the story of the lives that didn't make it into the history books. But is it my favorite? It is more male-centric than I like, but I have a shelf of wonderful counterweights that includes *The Invisible Sex* by Adovasio, Soffer, and Page (2007) and Sarah Milledge Nelson's *Gender in Archaeology* (1997).

I don't quite know how Charles C. Mann wrote *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus* (2005), but I was so enthralled, I tracked him down. I tore out his chapter about cotton (or anchovies) and maize, and traveled to Peru with it in my pocket. I also enjoyed *Turn Right at Machu Picchu* by Mark Adams (2011), Heather Pringle's *The Mummy Congress* (2001), and David Grann's terrific *The Lost City of Z* (2009).

I'd be remiss if I didn't add that all of the people in my book, *Lives in Ruins* (2014), are communicators, excellent at explaining (often colorfully) what they are doing and, in their own writing, engaging on the page (Sarah Nelson is a good example). I don't think I could have penetrated the intersection of the military and archaeology, for instance, without Laurie Rush's lively voice, or become excited about the classics without Joan Breton Connelly's writing, or understood anything about Paleolithic archaeology without John Shea's.

**Cornelius Holtorf:** David Macauley's *Motel of the Mysteries* (1979) is a classic parody of archaeology. It gives people, old and young, a big smile on their face when they think about the business that archaeologists are engaged in. Another favorite, making me smile a lot on the inside, is Gregory Benford's *Deep Time* (1999). Benford presents a fascinating discussion of some bold archaeological questions that are normally associated with other realms.

**Leonardo López Luján:** I very much enjoy all the books in the "Digging for the Past" series which was edited by Brian Fagan for Oxford University Press. These are books aimed at young adults interested in the great civilizations of antiquity. Their main advantages include their affordable price, small format, and also that they are hardcover books that are well-designed and profusely

illustrated. As for their content, this series gets it right in offering texts that have been written both by a professional archaeologist whose research concerns the book's main topic and by an author who specializes in writing for children and young adults. This results in books that are well written and contain information that is correct and up-to-date.

**Kara Cooney:** I would say that the Elizabeth Peters series is the best non-specialized introduction to archaeology and Egyptology, my own field. They are fiction, of course, but they were written by Barbara Mertz, who received her Ph.D. in Egyptology from the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. She gets her facts – about 19th-century dig methods, about Egyptian gods and goddesses, about sites – right. The non-specialist learns about archaeology without even being aware of it.

**Yannis Hamilakis:** David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), due to come out in a revised edition in 2015. Not strictly "archaeology," but central to the nature and operation of the discipline. It foregrounds the role of material heritage in the contemporary moment, addressing at the same time a range of crucial issues, from politics and nationalism to theoretical matters on temporality (discussed under the theme of "creative anachronism"). And all this in a writing style which is accessible to the non-specialist public. The rich illustration content of the book, of course, contributed significantly to its success.



### Question 2:

*Evolutionary biology, astronomy, geology, biology, oncology, and other hard sciences have had distinguished and successful popularizers (including, for example, Stephen Jay Gould, Carl Sagan, Martin Rudwick, Lewis Thomas, and Siddhartha Mukerjee). Has archaeology had similar specialists who have been capable of reaching and capturing large audiences? If so, who are they, and how do they do it? If not, why not?*

**Yannis Hamilakis:** There were some prominent names in the past, but I do not think that archaeology has such figures today, although there are some successful cases in Classics, and one or two in anthropology (such as David Graeber, for example). Several archaeologists, of course, have produced popular and semi-popular books, and some of them are successful, at least



in terms of sales. But have they changed the dominant public perception of the discipline? Have they managed to inform public opinion and public policy on the fundamental and urgent matters of our time, such as climate change, war and militarisation, global migration from the developing world, poverty and inequality, debt and neo-colonialism?

The reasons for such absence are many and diverse. Popular writing and communication with the public are not technical matters, are not to do with a “right formula” which, if found, will guarantee success. They are linked directly to our perception of the discipline and its ontological status. In other words, the scholarly, academic understanding of archaeology shapes the archaeologists’ attempts to go beyond their peers, and reach the wider public sphere. I have argued, time and again, that a fundamental ethical-cum-ontological problem for today’s archaeology is its restrictive modernist heritage, its professionalization, its self-guarding and policing of its boundaries (seen as essential in reasserting its autonomy vis-à-vis history, classics, and anthropology), its self-definition as a discipline of the past, the main ethical responsibility of which is the stewardship, preservation, and interpretation of the entity which it calls “the archaeological record” (e.g., Hamilakis 2007). It is no coincidence that, in the past, some of the most successful archaeological popularisers were not strictly professional in our contemporary sense: they had a wider education and sensibility, and had often followed diverse career paths. Our contemporary professionalized approach may have produced some short-term gains, but it is no longer adequate, being at the same time self-serving, and epistemologically as well as ethically and politically problematic and unsustainable. Moreover, the re-emergence of often uncritical and untheorized science discourses has facilitated the dominance of geneticists and neuroscientists, who seem almost to monopolise the public debates on cultural and social identity and on human experience.

Before we attempt to reach the various publics, thus, we should re-invent archaeology as a contemporary mnemonic practice, a form of cultural production that deals with all material traces from various times, which may inhabit the present but which are, by definition, multi-temporal. This will be a discipline of the present, without being presentist. It will evoke and re-enact various times, also showing their implications and effects on the present and future.

**Kara Cooney:** I would put Brian Fagan on the list, although he doesn’t have a larger media presence. His books are readable, interesting, and well known. I myself tried to create a comparative archaeology/anthropology series with “Out of Egypt,” which I co-produced, but I was told by executives at the Discovery Channel that it was “too educational.” I am not interested in



doing TV work any longer, unless I am also a producer and in control of the content: I have been mis-edited too many times by the History or Discovery Channel to say something I didn't really say. This means that PBS is our only outlet, which is sad, because with government cuts, PBS has become more like the Home Shopping Network than what it was in Carl Sagan's day. Until the media creates more niche outlets, or until we archaeologists can produce directly for an outlet like Netflix, I think the "educational" cable networks will continue to choose cheap and easy reality television, over content led by actual scholars and scientists. Having said all of that, I think Jared Diamond is the closest mass-popularizer archaeology has, and he is a geographer...

Although not an archaeologist, Bill Nye is also an interesting case, because to create his media presence he essentially had to leave the field and move into media full-time. Such choices are real, and I know them intimately. It is very difficult for a university professor to engage in media work on the side. There are only so many hours in the day...

**Colin Renfrew:** Archaeology has had its best-sellers: *Nineveh and its Remains* by A. H. Layard was one of the first, in 1848. Sir Mortimer Wheeler's *Archaeology from the Earth* did well enough in 1954. In our own day some of Brian Fagan's books have done rather well. But sadly none has recently rivalled in sales such pseudo-science as Erich von Daniken's *Chariots of the Gods*, first published in 1968. I suspect that one reason is that the best archaeologists find actually doing archaeology more exciting and interesting than writing general books about it.

**Marilyn Johnson:** I like David Hurst Thomas, and he's distinguished and popular. I know Ian Tattersall and Chris Stringer are both distinguished and popular. Bill Bryson, though – wouldn't it be fun if he did a whole book on an archaeological subject?

**Cornelius Holtorf:** It is all a matter of good story-telling. I think Archaeology has its share of great story-tellers. Two Germans in that category were C. W. Ceram and Rudolf Pörtner. Today, archaeological stories regularly reach large audiences in many countries without necessarily depending on single individuals.

**Brian Fagan:** I really don't follow who is doing this. I think that the only people who effectively write full time for the public in archaeology are Paul Bahn and I. Our expertises are very different. There are others, who are more on the scholarly side, such as Chris Scarre or David Lewis-Williams, the rock art expert. Thames and Hudson seems to have the most success with popular archaeology writings, although they tend to be on the more specialized side. But they seem to be cutting back the number of archaeology titles

they publish. (I think everyone is.) The narrow publish-or-perish syndrome which infects archaeology and a still persistent belief that popular writing is lightweight and not scholarly still pervade much of archaeology, and indeed, anthropology.

**Alfredo González-Ruibal:** I would like to mention a Spanish case here: the Atapuerca research team. Atapuerca is one of the most important palaeolithic sites in Eurasia for understanding the evolution of human beings. The co-directors of the research, Juan Luis Arsuaga, Eudald Carbonell, and José María Bermúdez de Castro, have not only published high-impact articles which have revolutionized our knowledge of human evolution, they have also published books that have been exceedingly popular in Spain (e.g. Arsuaga and Martínez 2004). In fact, Spaniards no longer associate archaeology with mummies or dinosaurs, but with the Palaeolithic (which is a problem for those of us who work on the opposite end of human evolution!). The directors of the Atapuerca project are considerably more famous than most other scientific popularizers in the country. However, part of their success lies in the fact that their research is situated at the intersection between the natural sciences and archaeology: Arsuaga himself, the most visible head, is a geologist. I would not say, therefore, that their success can be explained uniquely by them being savvy popularizers (which they are). Still, what has made their work fascinating for the public has been their storytelling ability: they have been able to produce a relevant narrative using things (basically, bones of people and animals and lithic tools). Any archaeologist should be able to do that. However, the narrative of human origins is difficult to match.

Of course, we always have the archaeo-appeal, as Cornelius Holtorf (2005) has pointed out, but we should also be wary of its dangers: astrophysicists do not have to resort to aliens, or biologists to monsters, in order to make their discipline attractive to the wider public (even if those are enrolled regularly). Perhaps we should emphasize more the relevance of archaeology as a mode of intellectual production, something that might be exciting because it addresses big questions that have an impact in the present, as Michael Shanks has noted (<http://documents.stanford.edu/michaelshanks/61?view=print>). In fact, there are some archaeologists that are following this path, like Ian Morris (2010) and David Wengrow (2010). To a large extent, this path was opened by people like Bill Rathje decades before: his main concern was showing the relevance of archaeology in addressing big contemporary issues, from garbage management to ecological crises (e.g., Rathje and Murphy 1992). For me, this is one of the ways archaeology can become simultaneously more popular and more relevant. This does not mean that we have to forget about the archaeo-appeal, but rather that we have to convince people that exciting discoveries

and archaeological adventures are all the more interesting when they allow us to reflect on relevant issues for the fate of humanity, past and present.

**Leonardo López Luján:** Without a doubt, the best writer in our field in terms of outreach is the archaeologist Brian Fagan. He has published dozens of books for the greater public, all of which have been successful commercially. Fagan is a distinguished specialist who has been able to translate the technical language of our discipline into knowledge that is easy to understand by the greater public. He has the double virtue of being a protagonist in our field, and, at the same time, a master of the essential tools required to transmit his knowledge in written and oral form.



### Question 3:

*The astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson has over two million likes on Facebook – much more by several factors than any archaeologist we know of. Is there something about archaeology that inherently eludes the radical reductions demanded by social media? What other factors might be involved?*

**Marilyn Johnson:** I don't begrudge Tyson his Facebook likes, and I think his popularity has less to do with the fact that he's an astrophysicist than with his personality. He is a charismatic scientist and his reach is good for everyone in the sciences. (And, just between us, I think "the radical reductions demanded by social media" dooms that question.) People who can capture the popular imagination are unusual and they pop up where they will.

**Leonardo López Luján:** I do not think that astrophysics and archaeology are fundamentally different. Such differences must be due to other causes. One of these could be that archaeology students take classes in universities in which students are not taught to engage in outreach that is also of high technical quality.

**Kara Cooney:** I don't think so. My own Facebook page is approaching 60,000 "likes," and I have no TV show. Tyson has a weekly TV show. If one of us had such a platform, this would be possible.

Also – I think we can make a go at popularizing, with the understanding that it will always be niche in comparison to the big hitters from astrophysics and biological sciences. Archaeology is, and always will be, a smaller thing than the "science" that Carl Sagan or Neil deGrasse Tyson represent. A quick



look at the grant dollars from the US Government is illustrative of this. Given that we are a smaller group of scientists, I also suspect that popularizers in our field do feel more of a personal sting from their colleagues who might push back at what you call “radical reductions.”

**Colin Renfrew:** Archaeology is like history in the sense that it is a long story with many fascinating and crucial moments, occurring in different parts of the world. It cannot successfully be encapsulated in focusing on just one grand discovery at one time and place.

**Brian Fagan:** I do not work with social media, which would consume far too much of my time. But I suspect that archaeology does not have the spectacular appeal of much of astronomy or, indeed history. It usually comes down to early fossils, royal burials, hoards, and pyramids. The success of *Time Team* in the UK has been truly remarkable, but there is a long tradition of popular archaeology in Britain that is not found here in the USA, where so much archaeology is the history of “them” and not of “us.” It is no coincidence that the most popular topics here are the Ancient Maya and the Inca, as well as South American mummies. They fit the popular image of archaeology. There is no archaeologist that I know of who has a wide popular following – but this may be because archaeology is not a very glamorous TV subject.

**Alfredo González-Ruibal:** I have the feeling that archaeology is still not regarded as a respectable science in the way astrophysics or evolutionary biology are. It is considered to be somewhat in the fringe: the image of the archaeologists is too much associated with mummies and mysterious ruins. While this admittedly attracts a lot of followers, it also keeps at bay many others who are interested in the “serious” (i.e. natural) sciences that can solve big problems. In my opinion, the questions addressed by astrophysicists and biologists are not necessarily more amenable to the Internet format than archaeological questions. One can tackle rather complex issues online. In my own experience – I run a collective blog on the archaeology of the Spanish Civil War (<http://guerraenlauniversidad.blogspot.com.es>) – when my colleagues or I write entries that have to do with the political, social or even epistemological aspects of archaeology, the posts receive more visits than those that describe sites or finds (even spectacular finds).

For me, the main difference between post-Palaeolithic archaeology and the other sciences is that archaeology is always local. Galaxies are universal and so are the Pliocene and the Australopithecines, since we all come from them. It does not matter if you are from Hungary or Canada: brown dwarfs affect you (or don't) the same. However, if you are from Hungary you will probably

be more interested in the history of the Huns than in the Inuit. It does not matter how wide and ambitious are the anthropological questions behind our research: it will still attract a larger local, national or even continental audience (as opposed to global). One continental example: whereas pre-Columbian archaeology features prominently in popular archaeology in the United States, it receives a relatively small share of interest in Europe, where the Romans, the Greeks and the Celts occupy much more space in archaeology magazines, TV programs and social media. This has a lot to do with identity, of course. Where I come from, people discuss hotly on the Internet whether they are Celts or just Gallaecians and this goes hand in hand with an interest in Iron Age hill forts. A similar debate would not make sense in astrophysics and very little in geology or biology (even if one may develop an interest for species or geological formations in the neighborhood). Again, those works that have archaeological references and at the same time have managed to attract a large and global audience deal with global issues: Jared Diamond or Ian Morris. An internet post or a tweet on Bronze Age Crete will have a hard time to become viral at a global level. The discovery of an exo-planet has it much easier.

**Yannis Hamilakis:** Many archaeologists use social media today, but as I have tried to show above, being in the social media does not offer the magic solution; it will not make archaeology automatically “cool” and accessible. My presence on Facebook and Twitter have brought me in contact with many non-specialists, but most of these people are normally indifferent to many of the issues we call strictly “archaeological.” They are, however, very interested in learning how archaeology can help us understand the important social and political matters of the present. Some of the most widely read pieces I have produced are to do with the present-day political implications of archaeological knowledge, and of archaeological monuments and sites. Stories about the material past itself, of course, can be fascinating and of wider interest. But let’s remember that every present-day perception of the material past, scholarly or other, is full of memories, is mediated by contemporary mnemonic recollections and experiences. It is also mediated by affective impulses, from nostalgia, to the desire for radical alterity, for other, better worlds, be they in the deep past or in other galaxies. Demonstrating the material and temporal nature of experience and at the same time foregrounding historical contingency, showing that things could have been otherwise, against all forms of teleological thinking, are some of the most important things we could do as archaeologists.

**Cornelius Holtorf:** There is no reason why archaeologists should not be as successful and likeable on Facebook and in other social media as they are

as characters in Hollywood films, in computer games or in literature. But archaeology remains a little discipline, although one that is known by many.



#### Question 4:

*After we launched the Archaeology for the People contest, several potential participants criticized us for accepting only written articles (as opposed to opening up the contest to, say, photography, video, comic-strips, and web-based pieces such as podcasts and blogs). How important and effective do you think media other than printed texts are in the dissemination of archaeological information to non-specialized audiences? Have you yourself used such 'alternative' media?*

**Cornelius Holtorf:** Moving images are of particular importance for reaching large audiences today: they can convey carefully defined messages more easily and in a more memorable way than texts. I do not see myself as a popularizer of archaeology, but I once commissioned a conference publication in the form of a graphic novel (*Places, People, Stories*, 2012) and facilitated recording of archaeological lectures and debates on film.

**Alfredo González-Ruibal:** I am all for old printed media when it comes to producing academic works. And when I say old media, I really mean it: I think we could produce books with watercolors and engravings as the antiquarians of two hundred years ago did (if anybody would be interested in publishing such kind of things). When one sees nineteenth-century archaeological reports, such as the publication of the German excavations at Olympia, one has the feeling that we have lost something. Video and digital imagery are not all. At the same time, I am aware that new media are extremely important to reach wider audiences, more than paper-based publications, and they allow us to play with older media, as well. The blog and a Facebook page of my Spanish Civil War archaeology project are quite popular, at least in relative terms: we have almost 7,000 followers on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/arqueologia.delaguerracivilesanola.9>), which might sound ridiculous, but it is not bad for a page in Spanish dealing with a very specialized project and an unusual kind of archaeology. Our blog has received half a million hits since 2009. Also, the Internet provides a public forum which is unavailable with more traditional forms of dissemination. We have received many comments, many of them quite brutal and outrageous, but these are perhaps the most useful, because they allow us to understand deep sociological issues



that do not emerge in the polite world of public lectures, guided tours and exhibitions. One can learn a lot from insults.

**Brian Fagan:** What your participants are criticizing the editors for is nonsense. Yes, the visual is important, as are blogs, but the issue here is properly written, engaging essays on archaeology. And certainly these other media do not encourage literacy – often quite the contrary. One of the biggest problems in archaeology, apart from a lot of it being unspectacular and frankly dull, is that very few archaeologists are trained to be good writers for general audiences. What these folk are proposing is a cop-out – and, I suspect, in some cases, an unwillingness to put the work in. Yes, other media than text are important, *if* they are done really well. I have used many alternative media, including TV and film, also radio and multimedia course formats. In my view, one of the most effective ways of communicating to wider audiences is through radio. It is short, to the point – and people listen to it in their cars. Having said all this, I think material developed for the iPad and phones would be very effective *if* the subject matter engages people from the beginning. Do you do this by using first person experience, evocative reconstructions, or just vivid writing? They all can work, but so much depends on the subject matter. For what it's also worth, I think that really good, well-illustrated lectures are very powerful – and underrated. I suspect that down the line we are going to see superb multi-media interactive books on the Web, but the expense of doing them, especially getting permission for images, is inhibiting development.

**Colin Renfrew:** The most popular medium for archaeology so far has been television. Indeed in the UK *Animal*, *Vegetable*, *Mineral* made Sir Mortimer Wheeler and then Glyn Daniel TV Personality of the Year in successive years. The transmission time taken up by archaeology exceeds that of nearly every other field, at least in the UK, although David Attenborough's programs on wild life have led the field in recent years.

Since you ask for personal reminiscence, my own BBC-TV Chronicle programs *The Tree that Put the Clock Back* and *Islands Out of Time* had good viewing figures in their day, and *Lost Kings of the Desert* gave a fair impression of Hatra, now reportedly destroyed by the so-called Islamic State. Today the programs on the archaeology of Central and South America by the British Museum's Jago Cooper are popular and authoritative, although they do not yet outshine Attenborough.

**Leonardo López Luján:** I have been involved in various projects that have attempted to disseminate archaeological knowledge on a large scale, including blogs, podcasts, videos, and video-games. All of these are high impact and effective, inasmuch as they offer information at a global scale

and almost always in forms that are immediate and at no cost. Nevertheless, I am confident that none of them can supersede the power, authority, and precision of the written word, as it appears in articles published in highly prestigious outreach magazines

**Marilyn Johnson:** I absolutely relied on a variety of websites and alternate media sources to research my book about archaeologists. I was influenced by Trent de Boer's *Shovel Bum: Comix of Archaeological Field Life* (2004) and (among others) by Naked Archaeology and the Archaeology Channel's podcasts; DigVentures's Twitter feed; the Smithsonian's website and Texas A & M's website for the Center for the Study of the First Americans; Bill Caraher's wonderful blog Archaeology of the Mediterranean World, and the illuminating TrowelBlazers blog; and one of my favorite sources for archaeological knowledge, Archaeology's Dirty Little Secrets, Sue Alcock and the Joukowsky Institute's course on Coursera.

**Yannis Hamilakis:** If archaeology is a contemporary mnemonic practice and cultural production at the same time, then it goes without saying that *all* artistic, performative, and literary media share with archaeology certain affinities, and all should be available for us to experiment with. They are extremely important in communicating with non-specialist audiences, and at the same time they can evoke the multi-sensorial and affective nature of materiality and temporality, and of archaeological work. I have extensively used various such media myself, in collaboration with colleagues and creative artists: from photo-essays (e.g., Hamilakis and Ifantidis 2013) and photo-ethnographic blogging ([www.kalaureiainthepresent.org](http://www.kalaureiainthepresent.org)), to semi-literary writing in academic publications and books (e.g., Hamilakis 2013), to theater-archaeology experiments (e.g., Hamilakis and Theou 2013), often as part of the shared, creative space that archaeological ethnography can engender. Such theater-archaeology performances were attended by hundreds of people in the rural countryside, as well as in Athenian restaurants and other venues. In a recent work, I experiment with a combination of poetic writing and photography, attempting to evoke the contemporary Athenian crisis-scape through an archaeological sensibility (Hamilakis 2015). Several of these publications appear in scholarly fora, but all of them are also disseminated in social media, whereas some others have accompanying photo-blogs ([www.theotheracropolis.com](http://www.theotheracropolis.com)).

**Kara Cooney:** I think it's very important to use non-written media. Everyone I know, including myself, has just too much to read. There is *always* a stack of things to read. Any means of communicating information that moves outside formal "reading" would be appreciated and create a freshness, a seduction.

For example, I am working on a coffins database right now, trying quickly and clearly to communicate complicated wood-panel painted scenes from the 21st Dynasty. With multiple levels of tagging on the visual medium and hopefully with some 3D photography, I will be able to abandon the deadly boring, unreadable, and unusable thick description most coffin studies have included. I will also be able to compare tagged scenes from coffin to coffin, allowing analysis that written description does not. Archaeology is visual. Are there ways to create visual ciphers that can be quickly consumed and analyzed by our brains? Instead of writing something about stratigraphy, can we create visual codes, even comic books, which combine limited text and extensive and colorful imagery?



### Question 5:

*For whom do you write?*

**Brian Fagan:** I mainly write books, ranging from long established textbooks for colleges and universities to volumes for National Geographic. Mainline trade houses such as Bloomsbury or Basic Books publish most of my work. (The entire non-fiction writing scene is changing fundamentally, not only because of e-books, but also because of smaller sales of serious non-fiction, a product of gross saturation in the marketplace.)

I have also written popular articles for all manner of outlets from *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, to *Gentleman's Quarterly* and *Smithsonian*, as well, of course, as *Archaeology Magazine*. I've also consulted widely for TV and radio series and published two courses with *Great Courses* (formerly known as *The Teaching Company*).

**Cornelius Holtorf:** Since with most of my work I intend to contribute to academic debate, I write a lot in academic journals and books. My main audiences are thus students and fellow researchers in my own and related disciplines. I also experience pleasure in the writing process as such, and in that sense I write for myself.

**Kara Cooney:** This depends on what it is. I actually use my formal and legal name Kathlyn M. Cooney for my scholarly writing and Kara Cooney for my popular writing. I don't know if anyone notices, but I do. I know that they are different. If I'm writing about my work on funerary reuse during the



Bronze Age collapse, I write for the specialist. But this same work has been popular among non-specialized audiences, and so I could imagine including that research in some of my popular writing.

For my last book, *The Woman Who Would Be King* (2014), an openly conjectural and personalized biography about Hatshepsut, I wrote for anyone with an interest in people, in power, or in the ancient world. If the narrative was getting bogged down with historiography or scholarly disagreement, that information was moved to an endnote. That way, the scholarly information is still there, but it doesn't pull the story away from the main character and her struggles. As I suspected might happen, the book received a very critical review in *KMT*, an Egyptology magazine, and a very favorable review in *Time*. There is indeed push-back when the scholar experiments with human emotion, whimsy, or conjecture, trying to flesh out characters from the ancient world.

**Colin Renfrew:** In a sense I write for myself. That is to say I write about what interests me. I have not deliberately contrived to make my books more popular, even when writing for a more general audience, as for instance in *Before Civilization: The Radiocarbon Revolution and Prehistoric Europe* (1973) or in *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* (1988). Setting out the argument clearly has seemed the main objective. But perhaps there is a lesson there which I have not yet learnt!

**Alfredo González-Ruibal:** I write on paper for my peers (I would like to think they are more than archaeologists) and on the Internet for the wider public. It is an excellent exercise, by the way, that informs and shapes my academic writing, so there is a lot of permeability. I have also written a popular book in Spanish on the archaeology of the Spanish Civil War (still waiting a publisher), because new media do not reach everybody (I, for one, read many books and articles and very few blogs and webpages) and because books are still necessary to develop a complex argument. There is also a blurred genre, which is that of field reports: I write my excavation reports in a way that can be satisfactory for the expert (they have all the information: finds catalogues, stratigraphic units, maps) and at the same time can be accessible for the non-specialist. I try not to write reports in an esoteric style that looks very scientific but often makes them difficult to follow even for other archaeologists. My aim is to produce a narrative. After all, to describe the excavation of a site is to tell the story of that site. The reports are uploaded on our institutional digital repository (<http://digital.csic.es>) and it is mostly the wider public, rather than other archaeologists, that download them. I would also emphasize the importance of talking, especially in countries where people do not read much. Public lectures are very important.

**Leonardo López Luján:** As any archaeologist does, I produce very different types of publications aimed at diverse audiences. Broadly speaking, I can say, on the one hand, that I write specialized books and articles aimed at my archaeologist colleagues and at professionals in related fields concerned with the study and understanding of the remote past. But on the other hand, I write for the so-called greater public. Since I work at a site-museum (Museo del Templo Mayor; [templomayor.inah.gob.mx](http://templomayor.inah.gob.mx)) I frequently edit catalogues for our temporary shows and these allow visitors to take home with them information additional to what they saw in the museum. I am also actively involved in the journal *Arqueología Mexicana*, which has a run of 60,000 copies that are sold throughout my country, but which also reaches many places abroad. This journal's purpose is to communicate to a non-specialized, but educated public the advances of our discipline in Mexico. Finally, I collaborate with major publishing houses and with professional illustrators, crafting stories, accounts, and narratives for children and young adults about the cultures of Mesoamerica.

**Marilyn Johnson:** I write for myself, to reach for and work out some idea that I have only a vague notion of, and to get access to a part of my brain that I can't get at otherwise. But I rewrite for my parents and my friends. I want to persuade and amuse and share what I'm learning with them. They are all lively and curious people who find the world a bit baffling these days – with good reason.

**Yannis Hamilakis:** For anyone who can read. But we do not just write: we also produce material realities, images, performances, installations, various multi-sensorial assemblages. We are thus cultural producers for all people, even for the ones – especially for the ones – who cannot read.



### Question 6:

*Very briefly (just a few sentences), why should anyone care about archaeology?*

**Alfredo González-Ruibal:** Which other discipline can find history in the latrine beneath your house?

**Cornelius Holtorf:** I don't think anybody needs to "care" for archaeology in the way you care for something that cannot take care of itself. Archaeology is doing remarkably well even beyond academia. Having said that, archaeology

is a field that has the potential to fascinate and engage many audiences, and those who choose to ignore archaeology will do so at their peril.

**Colin Renfrew:** There is no doubt that everyone should care about archaeology. For it answers one of the great questions: Who are We? It does so by revealing how we came to be what we have become. It can do so from the earliest times of a million and more years ago right down to the final exploration of the unknown world in the eighteenth century A.D., and on through the industrial developments which formed the modern era. Archaeology can also reveal the origins and nature of human diversity: the formation of peoples and of nations. It is successfully tracing the history of technology, and beginning to lead to the deeper understanding of human cognition. And its raw material is unending: the material evidence of the past!

**Yannis Hamilakis:** The most important first step for reaching various publics is the demonstration of relevance; an impoverished, modernist archaeology that deals exclusively with the past and with the “archaeological record” will continue to be seen as irrelevant. A contemporary archaeology, on the other hand, which shows that all urgent present-day matters are, one or way or another, to do with various configurations of temporality and materiality, and with evocations of material history and memory, can become directly relevant. People should care about archaeology, therefore, not because it can tell some stories about the past they did not know, but because archaeology can show how the experience and perception of materiality and temporality shape every aspect of their lives on earth. They should care because it can help them counter presentist notions, and “end of history” neo-liberal agendas, or what Fredric Jameson has called, the “contemporary imprisonment in the present” (2015: 120), at the same time demonstrating the material historicity of the contemporary moment, and the contingent and temporary and thus unstable nature of the current *status quo*. Finally, they should care because, based on its depth-knowledge of human experience on earth over the past two million years, it can help them imagine and invent new forms of living on earth, of cohabiting with non-human animals in a non-anthropocentric world, and of relating to other beings and to all organic and inorganic matter in a non-instrumental, non-exploitative manner.

**Marilyn Johnson:** “Haven’t all the important archaeological sites already been found?,” someone asked me. I think this is a common misperception. I always thought archaeology was fascinating, but a bit musty and arcane: broken pottery and bones, ruins, and dead civilizations. Then I observed archaeologists in action, in the context of their sites, and I saw a vital and pulsing frontier. Archaeologists are searching for signs of life in the past, and what they find often astonishes us.



**Leonardo López Luján:** Archaeology is of enormous importance in Mexico. Given the exceptional historical continuity of our culture, to practice archaeology in my country involves the reconstruction of the past not only as an abstract endeavor, but as the reconstruction of our own past, of the history of our ancestors, of our parents and grandparents. This helps us understand how our society has changed over the centuries; it helps us understand our current situation, and to plan a future in which we will not repeat mistakes, but will replicate historical successes. In this sense archaeology can act for us as a guide and a source of identity.

**Kara Cooney:** I work on the Bronze Age collapse. When people who fervently believed in the power of funerary materiality were faced with scarcity of that materiality, did they change their beliefs to match the new economic reality? Absolutely not. Instead, they found alternative ways of getting the funerary materiality, including reuse and theft. This is just one small drop in the bucket of collapse studies. As we move towards the largest environmental collapse the globe has ever experienced, research on human reactions to collapse are absolutely vital. I also work with the 18th Dynasty and the height of spending by the royal palace. This brings up questions of social place, of sustainability, of spending – all very topical to us today, as the 1% consumes more than anyone else. There is every reason to care about archaeology. And non-specialists do care. They are hungry to be taught and to learn. They are hungry for real information, not the “ancient aliens” nonsense. We can complain about ANCIENT ALIENS until we are blue in the face; but until archaeologists support each other in producing good and entertaining content that can compete with such shows, we will never win the stage.

**Brian Fagan:** Archaeology is the only way we have of studying human societies over immensely long periods of time and our complex, ever-changing adaptations to global environments and to climate change. It is also a unique way of examining emerging human diversity and understanding the ways in which we are similar and different. It is a unique mirror into changing human behavior, which forms our common cultural heritage. In short, archaeology helps provide the context for today’s rapidly changing world. Finally, for what it is worth, it has immense value for the rapidly expanding cultural tourism industry (cruise ships, jumbo jets, etc., as well as domestic tourism; the latter is huge, even in places like China and Cambodia).

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PERSPECTIVES FROM THE JOUKOWSKY INSTITUTE

edited by

John F. Cherry and Felipe Rojas

Oxbow Books  
Oxford and Philadelphia

Joukowsky Institute Publication 7

General series editor: Prof. John F. Cherry  
Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World  
Brown University, Box 1837/60 George Street, Providence, RI 02912, USA

Published in the United Kingdom in 2015 by  
OXBOW BOOKS  
10 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EW

and in the United States by  
OXBOW BOOKS  
1950 Lawrence Road, Havertown, PA 19083

Published by Oxbow Books on behalf of the Joukowsky Institute

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Paperback Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-107-8

Digital Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-108-5

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015952702

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Printed in the United Kingdom by Hobbs the Printers Ltd, Totton, Hampshire

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