

V. Book/Journal Article Reviews

New Perspectives on the Origins of Americanist Archaeology, edited by David L. Browman and Stephen Williams. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2002. x + 378 pp. \$39.95 (paper)

by

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This volume grew the second Gordon R. Willey Biennial Symposium on the History of Archaeology held in 1998 at the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Seattle. It is dedicated to Professor Willey, who died April 28, 2002. Twelve papers focus on the development of Americanist archaeology prior to World War I, with special emphasis on its European connections and on the work done by women.

A major theme linking these papers is the familiar archaeological concept of diffusion. In two papers Stephen Williams examines the influence exerted by European intellectual constructs on early speculations about the origins of aboriginal America. David Oestreicher's paper brilliantly demolishes the authenticity of Rafinesque's *Walam Olum* by showing how this supposedly aboriginal document was constructed to conform with beliefs about human origins held by the great savants of the European Enlightenment. These three studies address the history of antiquarianism in a broader sense than the history of archaeology. Terry Barnhart demonstrates how Ephraim Squier's interpretive writings combined a rationalist belief in 'psychic unity' with European literary romanticism. John Kelly documents how Charles Rau applied his German education in the natural sciences to describing and classifying artifacts and examining parallels in cultural development in the Old and New Worlds. Alice Kehoe traces how Daniel Wilson introduced to North America a mixture of cultural evolutionism and romanticism that was typical of early nineteenth-century Scandinavia and Scotland. Bruce Bourque traces how descriptions of shell-mound archaeology in Scandinavia stimulated the development of shell-midden archaeology in Maine, while Hilary Chester examines how the school teacher Frances Babbitt was inspired to study 'palaeolithic' remains in Minnesota by work being done by male archaeologists in the eastern United States. In three chapters, David Browman traces how Henry Mercer learned to do stratigraphic excavation from French archaeologists and how Frederic Putnam's widely disseminated technique for excavating mounds gave rise to Fay-Cooper Cole's 'Chicago Method' in the 1920s. Browman also documents how Putnam encouraged women to study archaeology. Harvey Bricker considers how George MacCurdy's graduate education in Austria, France, and Germany shaped the early development of American palaeoanthropology. It is unfortunate that the book does not include more illustrations, especially ones of maps and early recording techniques.

The transfer of information from one group of researchers to another is an essential process in any discipline and hence requires examination. Yet the mere occurrence of diffusion is only one part of the total picture. Archaeologists have learned that it is impossible to explain diffusion without also considering how and why ideas are accepted and become integrated into new settings. While Europe was a fertile source of ideas for North American antiquarians and archaeologists, North American archaeology did not develop in the same manner as did European archaeology. European archaeology evolved as a regional mosaic in which a triumphalist cultural evolution and nationalist visions were associated in many different combinations. In the United States, widespread racial prejudices against indigenous peoples that had emerged in the late eighteenth century defined the main task of archaeology as being to confirm that Indian cultures had remained primitive and largely static in prehistoric times. Focusing on diffusion also encourages a preoccupation with intellectual rather than with social history, and hence an internalist approach and a lack of broad contextualization. These are characteristics of most essays in this collection.

The editors characterize more general studies of the history of archaeology as "almost historical dictionaries or surveys of intellectual endeavors, rather than detailed inquiries into individual participants or concepts" and maintain that their volume "begins the process of a more thorough sociology of knowledge' of our field" (p. 9). They also cite Jennifer Croissant's claim that the "number, strength, and density of intellectual lineages and schools greatly affects (sic) the framing of research questions" (the one reallinking of this work to the present). I agree completely that detailed studies, especially those based on in-depth archival research, are vital for deepening an understanding of the history of archaeology. Such studies are not, however, new to archaeology, as exemplified by the distinguished publications of Jacob Gruber, D.J. Meltzer, D.K. Grayson, Curtis Hinsley, and many others. Although the editors do not cite her, I also agree with Nadia Abu El-Haj's (2001) prescient observation that no two instances of any particular tendency in archaeology are the same and therefore it is essential to study individual examples of all of their specific detail.

I do not, however, agree with the editors' claims if they are intended to advocate the abandoning of meganarratives' of the history of archaeology or to stigmatize such studies as superficial anticipations that are destined to be superseded by more specific studies. My own view is that more general and more specific studies constitute equally valid and significant approaches to the history of archaeology that are related interactively to each other: the development of one depends on the development of the other. Some of the papers in the present volume suffer from a lack of attention to more general studies. Several could have been more sharply focused had more attention been paid to the distinction between the prehistoric archaeology that developed in Scandinavia, Scotland, and Switzerland in the first half of the nineteenth century and the Palaeolithic Archaeology that emerged in England and France beginning in 1859.

Morlot's 1861 paper, often referred to in this book, was a review of the first sort of archaeology. Without reference to a broad view of the development of archaeology there is also greater danger that specific studies will become parochial. Interrelating the general and the specific facilitates transcending misleading dichotomies between internalist and

externalist explanations and between intellectual and social histories. Keeping an eye on broader perspectives requires effort, but the pay-off in terms of improving the standards of studies of the history of archaeology more than compensates for the extra labor. A magnificent exemplar of such an approach was provided early on by Stuart Piggott's *William Stukeley: An Eighteenth-Century Antiquary* (1950). Its success is attested by the fact that Piggott's interpretation of Stukeley's changing approach to archaeology continues to be debated to the present day.

Reference Cited

Abu El-Haj, Nadia

2001 *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and If-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Opening the Museum: The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, by Rubie Watson, Occasional Papers, Volume 1, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, paper, 16 pages, \$1.95.

by

Douglas R. Givens, Editor

Bulletin of the History of Archaeology

Rubie Watson, the William and Muriel Howells Director of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, has put together an excellent little volume covering the history of the opening of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. The volume briefly discusses the origins and development of the museum and the collections acquisition activities that were prosecuted. The volume discusses the history of the Peabody Museum displays of 1877 and the Peabody Museum of 1928 and 2001. The volume also briefly discusses the Museum's processing of its collections. For the reader interested in a brief historical look at the Peabody Museum, this volume is must for one's library. For one that is looking to have an addition to one's library on the history of the Peabody Museum, this volume should be a part of that collection.

VI. Activities of Various Academic Gatherings Related to the History of Archaeology

Randall McGuire sends word of an invitation to anyone interested in participating in a symposium at the Fifth World Congress in Washington, DC, June 21-26, 2003. Please feel free to pass this announcement on to other colleagues and students who might be interested in the session and to post it as appropriate.

You can get more information about WAC 5 at: <http://www.american.edu/wac5/>

Anglo-American and Hispanic Marxist Archaeologies