

BOOK REVIEW

## A Review of *Dissent with Modification. Human Origins, Palaeolithic Archaeology and Evolutionary Anthropology in Britain 1859–1901*

By John McNabb, Archaeopress, 377 pages, 2012, ISBN 9781905739523

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There are many excellent reasons why researchers with an interest in the history of the human sciences gravitate to that marvelously rich 50 years after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Detailed studies of the histories of anthropology, geology, palaeontology, and archaeology have been matched by in-depth studies of 19th century historiography. Much has been made of the complex links between science and society that evolved during this period, and the influence of science on literature, music and creative arts in general has also been the focus of attention. Part and parcel of this was the influence of contemporary politics (both national and imperial) on science, and the reverse. Then there have been pathbreaking studies of the institutions that fostered so much of this intense activity – museums, professional scientific societies, popular media, and of course groupings of amateurs and enthusiasts (especially those whose primary concern was the study of antiquities).

McNabb's book rehearses some of all this richness, with a particular focus on science fiction (as a response to all the ferment of discovery and interpretation) and a longish discussion of the Eolith controversy in Britain. Other books, especially van Riper's *Men Among the Mammoths* (1993) and Anne O'Connor's *Finding Time for the Old Stone Age* (2007) have traversed much of this archaeological territory in a more insightful way, to say nothing of the even greater number of papers and book chapters that have delved into the mid-19th century creative maelstrom (only a small sample of which have been cited by McNabb). But having said this, it's worth noting that McNabb has presented a coherent summary account of much familiar work, while adding some interesting new perspectives from his discussion of the science fiction of the period.

McNabb has an easy style and is not frightened of expressing opinions. The book is well illustrated and the production values are generally high.

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