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## **The Enchantment of the Archaeological Record**

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*Empirical studies increasingly testify to the capacity for archaeological and cultural heritage sites to engender wonder, transformation, attachment, and community bonding among diverse individuals. Following political theorist Jane Bennett, these sites have the power to ‘enchant’ and, in so doing, they are seedbeds of human generosity, ethical mindfulness, and care for the world at large. However, the means by which such enchantment is created, and the extent to which these intimate encounters with the prehistoric or historic record can be deliberately crafted, are little understood. Worsening the predicament, professional practices commonly thwart the potential for archaeology to provoke ethical action amongst humans. Here, I propose a multi-stranded conceptual model for generating enchantment with the archaeological record across both professional audiences and broader publics. With reference to the European Commission-funded EMOTIVE Project, I articulate one particular strand of this model: facilitated dialogue. Alongside exploring the role of digital culture in its advancement, I argue that an enchantment-led approach is imperative for achieving a truly socially-beneficial archaeological discipline.*

**Keywords:** archaeological enchantment, emotion, digital technologies, archaeological method, museums and cultural heritage sites, professional practice

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is difficult to express how uniquely affecting are the methods, processes, sites, artefacts, interpretations, characters, stories, and storytellers borne of the fields of archaeology and cultural heritage.<sup>1</sup> Conceptually, in Hearne’s (in press) assessment, this affective power has been described as the ‘magic of the past’ (Holtorf, 2005), the ‘archaeological uncanny’ (Moshenska, 2006), and the ‘archaeological imagination’ (Shanks, 2012). Empirically, its impact has been measured in perceived positive outcomes ranging from mental wellbeing through to restoration, personal satisfaction, family bonding, and pro-social behavioural

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<sup>1</sup> I use the terms archaeology and cultural heritage interchangeably throughout this article, with the latter encompassing museum environments and other cultural sites (e.g. art galleries).

change (Packer & Bond, 2010; Black, 2018; Zhou et al., 2018). One might argue, borrowing from political theorist Jane Bennett (2001), that archaeological and heritage sites have the power to *enchant*, and, in so doing, they stand as seedbeds for human generosity, ethical mindfulness, and care for the world at large. In other words, archaeology can move us—it can ‘remind us that it is good to be alive’ (Bennett, 2001: 156)—and this affective response can motivate us to act back on the world in constructive, ethically-minded ways.

Such enchantment effects are simultaneously well-recognized yet poorly understood amongst archaeologists and heritage specialists, surely because of what Hearne (in press: 2) describes as their ‘highly personal, speculative nature.’ Yet, as practitioners, we are singularly positioned to access and ignite sparks of enchantment, suggesting that we have a professional responsibility and moral obligation to systematically investigate their dimensions and analyse their consequences. As described below, a significant body of scholarship testifies to the relationship between archaeological enchantment and the nurturing of individuals as both stewards of the prehistoric or historic record and good citizens in general. Bennett’s vision of enchantment offers a particularly meaningful framework for disciplinary investment owing to its agonistic approach and its appreciation of the purposeful nature of enchantment, wherein deliberate design (by archaeologists working intentionally to foster affect) may encourage genuine social action.

In the following article, I aim to lay the foundations for such a mode of practice, with an explicit concern for attending to some of the discipline’s most pressing current challenges (e.g. Nixon, 2017; Wills, 2018). I begin by discussing obstacles within archaeology (and the cultural sector at large), which contribute to the systematic misconstruing and disenchantment of the historic record and deep past. I go on to articulate the evidence for an enchanting (or what might be referred to as emotionally engaged or affective) archaeology, and its potential for achieving the goals of a truly publicly-beneficial professional practice. From there, I propose a conceptual model for generating enchantment with the archaeological record amongst *both* professional audiences and broader publics. I note the essential role that digital technologies occupy in advancing and complicating these efforts, and focus on one particular strand of the model that has been tested through the EU-funded EMOTIVE Project ([www.emotiveproject.eu](http://www.emotiveproject.eu)). Herein, facilitated dialogue with both professional and broader audiences works people through complex conversations about the nature of the past in the present and the future, invoking enchantment and, we anticipate, subsequent action in or on the world. Reflecting on the structural difficulties inherent in such efforts, I ultimately posit that enchantment offers archaeology a more accommodating, less cynical social purpose;

however, effort must be invested into driving the intellectual and professional changes necessary to realise it.

### **THE NEED FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AS A SOURCE OF ENCHANTMENT**

My argument for the enchantment of the archaeological record rests on three contentions whose dimensions have been detailed by many archaeologists and heritage practitioners.

#### **Contention 1**

Archaeology has inherent in it sources of enchantment—what Hearne (after Shanks, 2012) calls the ‘archaeological imagination’ (see Hearne, *in press*, for a fuller account of this phenomenon). We are literally atop untold histories: things, ideas, lives, and activities that we have never seen before, that we may know nothing of, and that can thus endlessly surprise and transform us. The very nature of archaeology, as a subject open to interpretation when new techniques, voices, and intellectual frameworks are introduced, furthers this facility for surprise and transformation.

#### **Contention 2**

The methods we use as professionals to craft the archaeological record and the typical accounts we write about the past tend to revolve around crisis, driven by the sector’s normative ‘preservation paradigm’ and ‘conservation ethos’ (Högberg et al., 2017). These narratives focus on the archaeological record as a non-renewable resource, privileging what May (2009) calls endangerment narratives—stories of rescue, acts of salvage, and to borrow from Fredheim (2018: 622), other ‘righteous cause[s] to be championed for the good of society’. This rhetoric presumes there is some version of the past that can be ‘saved’ in perpetuity, as though it is not always in flux, constantly subject to reinterpretation. Indeed, following Rico (2015), heritage policy generally grounds itself in a ‘threats-based approach’ relying on an ‘extinction framework’ and a discourse of catastrophism which obscures the political and financial motivations behind its operation.

Not only does the evidence suggest that such discourse is unappealing to wider audiences (see Contention 3 below), but it also blinds us as archaeologists and heritage practitioners from conceiving of new futures and different interpretations (after Högberg et al., 2017), weakens our resilience in the face of genuine adversity and inevitable change (Holtorf, 2018), and arguably makes meaningless the very notion of heritage value because of its ubiquitous and unnuanced application (Rico, 2015). In other words, it is a key source of

professional disenchantment, which to draw from Bennett (2001: 13) ‘too often produces an enervating cynicism’ (see also comparable arguments in Carver, 2011).

Redfern (2017) speaks explicitly of the ongoing trend of heritage sector professionals bemoaning the state of crisis within the discipline, while they simultaneously do little to change what are now outdated practices grounded in a logic that was set decades ago. This logic, embodied very obviously in the UK’s Policy Planning Guidance Note 16 (PPG16, 1990), runs, to quote Redfern (2017: 3), as follows:

- Archaeology is a finite and non-renewable resource—once lost it is lost forever.
- The preservation and protection of archaeological sites and archaeological knowledge is our primary purpose.
- ... We must create records, lists and archives about the past and what we have dug up. Material must be archived and stored for future generations.

Yet the supposed non-renewability of the archaeological record is highly questionable, as attested for example by recent overviews of the sector (e.g. Nixon, 2017). In fact, archives themselves are premised on the notion that we can forever discover new and different things about their contents—hence the preservation of these contents, ripened for reinterpretation over time. As Redfern (2017: 3) puts it, echoed to some extent by Holtorf (2018: 4), ‘In my experience the amount of archaeological sites has never diminished – the more we look the more we find; we have developed more and more ways to find things; we constantly broaden our horizons about heritage and meaning so the level of interaction with sites and the stuff left behind by past societies increases. To my mind there is nothing finite about this.’

### **Contention 3**

Archaeological crisis narratives are not only debilitating for archaeologists themselves, but there is little to confirm their appeal to wider audiences. Evidence indicates that our extant professional narratives have *not* proven broadly successful at persuading people of the social benefits of heritage (Nixon, 2017), and archaeologists (perhaps the majority) lack the capacity and support to create new narratives (Wills, 2018: 33). A threats-based discourse strips wonder from the archaeological record, promoting a belief in the inalienable authenticity of the stuff to be ‘rescued’, which—as with anything that fetishizes authenticity (here I follow the arguments of Shorin, 2018a & b)—variously begets irony, false consciousness, nihilism, or essentialism. These narratives rarely offer alternatives. Arguably, by their very nature, they cannot offer alternatives; instead, to borrow from Rico (2015: 158), they simply leave us with a sense of the ‘loss of a human future’. Moreover, they depend on

the unsound assumption that care is forged primarily or solely through threat (an argument that is not corroborated by studies on this subject, e.g. McDonald, 2011).

As I see it, such rhetoric is not only generative of resentment and hopelessness in the face of seeming inevitability, but it is simplistic in the sense that it requires little to no imagination. It betrays an overt gap in the professional skillset related to interpretative aptitude (Perry, 2018) and begs for a new ‘moral model’ (after Shorin, 2018a) for the discipline.<sup>2</sup> My interest, then, is in how we might confront this discourse with the wondrous affordances of the heritage record itself, teased out through the various skillsets, toolkits, and creative energies of archaeological specialists and their audiences.

### HOW DO WE GENERATE ENCHANTMENT?

I suggest that in the context of archaeology and heritage, enchantment is generated (whether deliberately or not) via what I loosely call emotive engagement. Terminological debates around the nature of emotion and affect are rife, but here I defer to the definitions of emotion, feeling, and affect provided by Wetherell et al. (2018: 1): ‘Traditionally, affect is the more generic term, highlighting the embodied state and the initial registering of events in bodies and minds. Feeling refers to qualia and the subjective phenomenological experience, while emotion refers to the processing and packaging of affect in familiar cultural categories such as anger, grief, schadenfreude, etc.’ But, of specific interest to me is their assertion that ‘emotion is action-oriented; it pushes people to do things’ (Wetherell et al., 2018: 1). Elsewhere, Wetherell (2012: 4) calls emotion ‘embodied meaning-making.’ As I interpret this, emotion is enacted in the body, and it propels the body forward to act in some fashion, whether that act is visible or invisible, physical or conceptual.

So too does Wetherell’s interpretation of emotion align with others’ descriptions of emotive experiences like inspiration: ‘a feeling that leads to doing (something big or small)’ (Latham et al., 2018: 5). What is crucial for my argument is that everyone (specialist and non-specialist alike) has the aptitude to be inspired, to feel, to be emotively engaged. Hoare (2018: 2) captures the point neatly when she writes ‘the ability to move and be moved is not a luxury; in recognising this and working with affective practices, we can develop strategies to explore instances of feeling in cultural and heritage experiences.’

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<sup>2</sup> I would go further to suggest, following Shorin (2018a), that we can only achieve this if we do away completely with the ‘authenticity paradigm’ in archaeology in order to allow us to conceive of ‘better versions of post-capitalism.’ This topic deserves a separate analysis, as Shorin’s arguments (Shorin is a design specialist) are perhaps in tension with those put forward by others inside the discipline of archaeology, e.g. as they relate to constructivism, materialism, religion and spirituality, aura, and authenticity as described in Fredengren (2016).

Indeed, inspiration can be nurtured (Gilson, 2015)—we can work to ‘woo or invite it’ (Hart, 1998: 26 quoted in Gilson, 2015: 59; also Latham et al., 2018). A substantial body of literature outlines precisely how and why we might seek to generate such emotive engagement in the cultural heritage sector. In terms of *how*, frameworks for practice (including design, development, and evaluation) range from the more conceptual (e.g. Witcomb’s [2015] ‘pedagogy of feeling’, Smith’s [2014] ‘registers of engagement’) to specific, actionable triggers of affect, such as engaging people in acts of reciprocity, imitation, replication via verbalisation, roleplaying, personalization of experience, legitimate decision-making, humour, challenge, thinking through body-related themes, active listening, agonistic debate, and dialogue (e.g. Nilsen & Bader, 2016; Deufel, 2017).

When applied critically, these approaches can be tied directly to myriad personal, social, and political outcomes, creating attachment to and appreciation of heritage sites and their exhibits (e.g. Poria et al., 2003), as well as lasting remembrance (Park & Santos, 2017), personal restoration and transformation (Packer & Bond, 2010), learning (Staus & Falk, 2017), family bonding and community building (Zhou et al., 2018), and concern to protect what one perceives as important (McDonald, 2011). In the ideal scenario, as articulated by a growing body of museums and heritage scholars, such efforts could bring about human resistance to hegemony, leading to social and political change (Lynch, 2017).

### **CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH ARCHAEOLOGY AND HERITAGE**

The evidence that archaeology and heritage are, and have always been, inescapably bound into socio-politico-economic power structures and human rights is incontrovertible (e.g. McGuire, 2008; Hardy, 2017). If nothing else, we should feel encouraged that practitioners and representative professional bodies now increasingly recognize such power dynamics as a given, thus prompting them to articulate strategic visions and objectives which explicitly define their socio-political aims, such as Hearne’s (in press) radical archaeology, or Hutchings and La Salle’s (2014) tenets for anti-colonial archaeology teaching.

But, summarising the situation in the museums sector, Lynch (2017: 23) writes that ‘While announcing their social justice credentials, museums and galleries have yet to make convincing arguments regarding their useful civic role.’ Hutchings and La Salle (2018: 2) echo these words in relation to community archaeological practice, where they note that any claim of its status as ‘a panacea for archaeology’s ills is a self-serving whitewash.’ In other words, the evidence that archaeology and heritage institutions are genuinely realising their social value and civic welfare aims is questionable, if not non-existent.

González-Ruibal et al. (2018: 507), in a vexed argument about current public archaeology, profess that the overt ideological models recently adopted by archaeologists ‘have promoted an agenda during the last decades that has left us politically and theoretically disempowered.’ By their logic, naïve efforts at inclusion and, by extension, affect have fostered populism, in the sense that everyone has a voice and a right to exercise that voice regardless of the coherence or veracity of the statements being made and their potential impacts on others. What results from such circumstances is a kind of ‘progressive neoliberalism’, ultimately leading to the opposite of social justice and ‘emancipatory politics’ (González-Ruibal et al., 2018: 509).

While I question the simplistic polemics that González-Ruibal and colleagues (2018) deploy to propel their argument, data suggest that some of the larger democratic ambitions of archaeology are being undermined by contradictory practices and indefatigable authorised discourses (e.g. Richardson, 2014; Bonacchi et al., 2018). To me, however, such findings do not offer a reason to deride existing practice or reject whole models of thinking (as González-Ruibal and colleagues propose), but rather to continue consolidating, progressively refining, and systematically evaluating our efforts<sup>3</sup>.

Scholarly studies show that people are receptive to the possibility of cultural sites calling into question how they think about things (West, 2013 citing Cameron, 2005), challenging global policy, and informing current and future social and environmental development (Kajda et al., 2018). People generally want to explore ‘complex, controversial topics’ in museum contexts (Carnall et al., 2013: 66); and major research endeavours across multiple continents demonstrate that people do *not* expect cultural institutions to be neutral but rather to ‘have a social responsibility to take a leading role in inspiring people’s social and political activism in order to help bring about change’ (Lynch, 2017: 24). As suggested above, we can prime people to be open to these points of inspiration (Gilson, 2015) and craft meaningful experiences for people even if they do not match typical preferences (see Pekarik et al., 2014). Moreover, the literature shows that professionals regularly wrongly judge their audiences, underestimating their ‘capacity... to respond and debate—to be challenged’ (Lynch, 2013: 6).

In sum, while some evidence suggests that heritage most powerfully affirms people’s existing personal, social and political values, even in circumstances where a heritage site has been curated to challenge these values (Smith, 2014; Bartram, 2017), research also indicates

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<sup>3</sup> My viewpoint is also at odds with La Salle and Hutchings’ (2018) argument that fundamental conflicts in our approaches to public and commercial archaeology/heritage management make the goals of current community practice incompatible and unachievable.



that there is space (mostly still unexplored) to hone ‘the enchantment effects of archaeology and heritage... to motivate a move from ethical thinking to ethical action... to make a move for better futures to come’ (Fredengren, 2016: 496; also Hearne, in press).

### **WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGICAL ENCHANTMENT?**

I use the term enchantment here as I understand Jane Bennett (2001: 5) to mean it—‘a state of wonder’ that typically entails surprise, pleasure, uncanniness (discomfiture), presence, or sensory agitation. In Bennett’s conceptualisation, this affective state leads to action in or on the world, which allows me to liken it to the definition of emotion outlined above. Moreover, in line with the emotive research previously discussed, enchantment according to Bennett (2001: 4, 10) can be ‘fostered through deliberate strategies’ and is experienced by all, rather than being a luxury of the few. By Bennett’s (2001: 3) reckoning, we can ‘accentuate’ the world’s affective forces therein encouraging ‘ethical generosity.’

Bennett offers various reflections on the generation of enchantment: it can be encountered by surprise or be deliberately generated (including through technological intervention) by play, art, laughter, attentiveness to specificities, as well as by resisting the idea that there is no such thing as enchantment. It is ‘an uneasy combination of artifice and spontaneity’ (Bennett, 2001: 10). It does not privilege happiness or positive affect, and it does not depend on divine intervention or fate or the necessity of a designed universe, because to do so enables ‘complacency in the face of cruelty and violence’ (Bennett, 2001: 10 after Voltaire).

Christina Fredengren is among those to acknowledge and explicitly champion archaeology as an engine of this Bennettian vision of enchantment. As I understand her, archaeology affords engagements with time whose ever-emergent ‘novel materialities’ can be ‘read as indices of a variety of relationships, precisely because they ‘trouble’ the present with objects and substances that have crossed temporal boundaries’ (Fredengren, 2016: 488). This means that archaeology has:

‘the power to disrupt notions of inevitability or neo-social evolutionism: to reveal alternative assemblages, arrangements and relationships...it could be deployed to speak to contemporary issues of inter-generational responsibilities (between generations), debates on ‘global’ justice (in terms of historical inequalities), and our ethics towards, and care for, the human and more-than-human world’ (Fredengren, 2016: 483).

Fredengren's approach seemingly relies on a spiritual or 'otherworldly' rationale, wherein archaeology is enrolled in part to 'provide religious experiences in a post-secular way' (Fredengren, 2016: 493). Such religious motivations sit in tension with Bennett's more agnostic version of enchantment, and they arguably perpetuate a predicament that has long afflicted archaeology, where divine yearning is embraced by people to make sense of the world and its 'mysteries' (see Borck & Thompson, 2018 for more on the dangerous consequences of appealing to mystery and otherworldliness as part of archaeological practice). Fredengren herself (2016: 483; emphasis in original) suggests that enchantment effects can 'create the possibility of seeing *other ways of being in the world*', but as I reckon, these need not be predicated upon spiritualism.

### **WHAT DOES A MODEL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ENCHANTMENT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?**

The archaeological sector begs for a model of practice that escapes conventional discourses in order to constructively impact on the present and future. As Fredheim (2018: 623) suggests, 'Alternative heritage practices should... not only be about forgetting or curating decay, but also include creative renewal and addressing toxic pasts that will not be neutered by silence.' Fredheim himself is inspired by the ideas of Sarah May and members of the Heritage Futures Project, who suggest that 'the heritage sector should be activating archaeological heritage to instigate specific, desirable transformations of the present for the future' (Högberg et al., 2017: 645). They cite the approach of Schlanger et al. (2016), where heritage offers a means to 'promote reflection on responsibility and long-term pathways of recovery and renewal in future societies' (Högberg et al., 2017: 645).

Emotion-oriented research in the cultural sector offers us a wider conceptual rubric for 'activating' precisely such pathways to recovery and renewal. Herein enchantment promoted by emotive engagement is used to instigate ethically-minded action on the world. Archaeologists, therefore, can consciously and critically bring into play emotive engagements in what I perceive to be four key ways:

- 1- Through **archaeological inscription practices**, where enchantment is facilitated via primary data recording, reporting, and archiving systems that are enhanced to share and increase affect (see more in Perry et al., in prep). These practices constitute the objects of the archaeological record which can then enchant their users;
- 2- Through **higher-order interpretative practices** (developed for both specialist and broader publics) that critically deploy emotive theory and method to generate enchantment in the way that good storytelling is meant to do, and that evaluate effects on audiences (see Perry, 2018);

- 3- Through **constructive, agonistic debate** (amongst both specialist and broader publics) on the topics of (1) and (2), following a model of facilitated dialogue that allows for conflict and accepts risk and potential failure;
- 4- Through ongoing experimentations with **craft skills and creativity**, elaborated through ethical user-centred design and development models that enable us to better accomplish (1), (2), and (3), and regularly reassess their impacts.

Engagements with craft and creativity are already well-explored in archaeology (see examples in Perry, 2018); others—including affective recording and archiving, and agonistic debate—are not. As part of the EMOTIVE Project, a three-year international research endeavour funded by the European Commission, we are working to investigate how affective engagement with heritage might produce care, social conscience, and civic welfare. Specifically, EMOTIVE is developing tools for specialists, as well as experiences for non-specialists, that provoke and evaluate affect in relation to heritage. To do this, our team of technical developers, researchers, small businesses, and curators of heritage sites is articulating a conceptual model, evaluation framework, and associated technological solutions (e.g. 3D moulds, a mixed reality Unity plug-in, a mobile app authoring tool, and 360° virtual museum tool) that we are deploying with different stakeholders in specific case studies (e.g. with Young Archaeologists' Clubs, visitors to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Çatalhöyük, Turkey, tourists and worshippers at York Minster, virtual reality gamers). Below, I present EMOTIVE experiments at Çatalhöyük and York Minster particularly related to agonistic debate (#3 above), as our findings here point to trends which both validate and threaten wider roll-out of the enchantment model. Note that aspects of points 1, 2 and 4 (above) are also explored in recent and forthcoming publications (Perry, 2018; Perry et al., in prep; Roussou et al., 2019).

EMOTIVE works within a frame that matches the dominant participatory/public value model which increasingly guides heritage policy in the UK and internationally. Accordingly, our greatest challenge has been grappling with the failings of this model, as criticised by Lynch and González-Ruibal et al. (see above). In their worst incarnations, these failings lead to public participation/value manifesting as a 'gift' (Lynch, 2017), resulting in a kind of 'indebtedness engineering', an 'empowerment-lite', a 'welfare model' or charity model, wherein participants are reduced to subjects in need of help (all cited in Lynch, 2017). According to Lynch, who reflects on the predicament in the museums sector:

‘The ‘progressive’ well-meaning *inclusive* and *engaged* museum... inadvertently continues to be based on a centre-periphery model... [By] placing people in the position of being *beneficiaries* of their assistance

(of their *gifts*), the museum/gallery exercises invisible power and can inadvertently rob people of their active agency and the necessary possibility of resistance’ (Lynch, 2017: 14, emphases in the original).

The focus on cultivating empathy and/or happiness that drives many cultural heritage institutions today is, following Lynch (see comparable critique by Fredheim, 2018), arguably grounded in this charity mode. Here resistance and challenge are washed away by misguided efforts—often feel-good stories or the opposite: agonising narratives of human suffering and crisis—that can lead to superficial understanding, passivity, and a false sense of activism. Such work thereby undermines both democracy and individual and collective agency, the very outcomes that the institutions purport to strive for. In fact, a wealth of evidence shows that most affective participatory efforts have neither changed ‘institutional habits of mind’ (Lynch, 2017: 21) nor genuinely provided the space for participants to explore social justice and radical trust (Lynch, 2013). Indeed, these efforts may actually discriminate against people who do not have the skillsets or confidence to debate and co-create; and, where conflict or disagreement arises through such work, research indicates that professionals lack the ability to ‘deal with the heightened emotions, frustration and anger (at times) of... community partners’ (Lynch, 2013: 2). Such lack of ability is predictable because most models of practice assume that empathetic relations and emotive engagement should be positive in nature, leading to positive outcomes (Canning, 2018). This positive prejudice is embedded in most emotion assessment tools (driving a circular logic), and ignores data which indicate that negative emotions, discomfort, and struggle can be equally productive for learning outcomes and value formation. Unsurprisingly, after Tøndborg (2013: 14), the implicated bodies ‘do not act in order to better things or resolve matters’; instead they tend to suppress the democratic project by belabouring consensus, ‘denying the opportunity for resistance to be made manifest’ and ‘rewarding those whose behaviour is less challenging’ (Lynch, 2013: 3).

Of importance, digital media play a tricky role in this sabotaging of outcomes, as they are often enrolled in wonderment programmes that seek to nurture the most stereotyped of affective impacts. This is perhaps no more obvious than with virtual reality (VR), the so-called ‘ultimate empathy machine,’ which is regularly professed to allow a first-hand experience of others’ lives merely via donning a head-mounted device. Loh (2017) offers a rich critique of the fallacy at play here, wherein we confuse the simple act of putting ourselves inside the representational frame with genuine understanding of others’ experiences. ‘True empathy’ requires work; it is ‘the labor of comprehension: mind-work, not gut-work alone’ (Loh, 2017). It needs to be trained, it requires attention, it demands a

capacity to imagine and manoeuvre through sometimes complex, sometimes mundane narratives.

As I see them, digital media are uniquely placed to enable such ‘mind-work’. When deployed carefully,<sup>4</sup> these media have untold capacity to force reflexivity and criticality amongst their users (see review of scholarship in Perry & Taylor, 2018). In the EMOTIVE Project, then, digital technologies are enlisted into the affective experience in sometimes subtle, sometimes overt fashion, but always with a concern for subverting expectations. This focus on subversion manifests itself in multiple ways through EMOTIVE case studies that concentrate on:

- **3D prints** of archaeological artefacts that purposefully thwart the authenticity paradigm and the automated nature of the printing process: users mould the prints themselves, then decorate them however they please;
- **VR** that requires multi-user interaction with both physical and virtual objects and people;
- **chatbots** that do not necessarily answer questions, but rather persistently *ask* questions, challenging the beliefs of their users (Roussou et al., 2019);
- simple **mobile apps** that defy the ‘authorised’ discourse for a heritage site by enabling visitors to narrate their own relevant stories, whilst their tour guides work to facilitate dialogue.

To some extent, we are inspired by Poole’s (2018: 301) call for more attention to digital technology as ‘a tool for changing the rules by which we construct and define historical knowledge at heritage sites.’ In EMOTIVE, the digital extends the user, but this extension serves to create an uncanny distance, sensory agitation, or surprise that is crucial for inspiration leading to action (Figure 1). Following Kidd’s (2018) definition of immersive heritage experiences, we do *not* conceive of digitality as the ‘key defining feature’ of an EMOTIVE experience, but rather as an agent in a more complex process of enchantment.

### FACILITATED DIALOGUE AS ARCHAEOLOGICAL ENCHANTMENT

With such complexity in mind, I contend that it is direct human-to-human communication that has the most potential for transforming opinions, rewriting crisis narratives, and breaking down barriers between the past, present, and future. Dialogue-led methods in archaeology and heritage are rare, even though the evidence is clear that they can effectively prompt self-

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<sup>4</sup> A great deal of scholarly work testifies to the negative, disempowering, cruel, and oppressive potential impacts of digital media if applied in naïve fashion. Visser (2017: 57, summarising the work of others) speaks of how such media replicate, rather than destabilise, dominant structures, ‘promot[ing] equality only when other factors, such as economic well-being, infrastructure and information/media literacy, are considered’ and failing to demonstrate ‘unambiguously positive democratic potential.’ Arguably this is true of any media.

reflection and perspective-taking, leading to constructive alliance-building and democratic engagement with others (see review in Gargett, 2018, including work by Deufel, 2017, and the US National Park Service and International Coalition of Sites of Conscience). Most of our EMOTIVE case studies are devised around models of facilitated dialogue (see Gargett, 2018; McKinney, 2018). Here, simple digital interfaces (on mobile phones or computers) offer text-based instructions or questions to provoke conversation and physical interactions between multiple individuals (specialists and broader publics alike). The facilitator is either digital (e.g. a chatbot) or a human present in the experience (either a heritage expert, educator, or public participant) who attempts to ensure that genuine dialogue is achieved. While the goal of each experience differs depending on context, we aim to demonstrate three main outcomes: contextualisation of knowledge, perspective taking, and affective connection. These generally map onto the anticipated outcomes of both historic empathy and facilitated dialogue (McKinney, 2018). Our findings are encouraging, although some people (crucially, those with a professional association with archaeology and heritage) struggle with the concepts and the unavoidable outcomes of emotive participatory practice.

In one EMOTIVE experience, an exploration of egalitarianism intended for visitors to the site of Çatalhöyük in Turkey (Mirashrafi, 2017; see [Figure 2](#)), the design is purposefully ‘light’ on archaeological data, focused instead on exposing the participants’ present-day socio-economic values via their shared enactment of egalitarian practices. They collaboratively perform activities that may seem unfamiliar (e.g. exchanging and altruistically leaving behind things they consider as ‘theirs’), mimicking Neolithic Çatalhöyük’s likely socio-economic organisation (Perry et al., in press). It is through this shared, enacted reckoning with unfamiliar actions that we suspect the most powerful affect might be achieved; and, for non-specialist participants, we tentatively suggest that this is the case. According to one participant: ‘I feel in touch with the people... like, you can actually begin to imagine what their life was actually like...’ Another participant put it as such: ‘[I] felt it was more about us, ...placing us in the situation, and making us think about each other and our opinions and our thoughts. I didn’t really think factually. I didn’t think archaeologically... I felt, like you [her partner] said, like I was exploring myself in that situation.’

By contrast, archaeologists demonstrated less positive affective engagement, actively expressing concern over the personal exposure necessitated by the experience and over the nature of the archaeological interpretation, even skipping over parts of the experience in order to reach the end more quickly (Mirashrafi, 2017).

In another EMOTIVE experience intended to subvert the authorised discourse of the traditional guided tour, a dual mobile device-/human-facilitated tour of the English cathedral of York Minster uses the Minster's heritage as the launching pad for critical dialogue between strangers on contemporary social issues (Gargett, 2018) (see [Figure 3](#)). Following the National Parks Services' 'arc of dialogue' model, the experience leads participants through a process of getting to know one another, collectively choosing a theme to explore (e.g. health, love), educating each other on that theme as it relates to the Minster, contributing an imaginative, personally-relevant element to that educational process, and then linking the theme to present-day matters of concern (e.g. mental health stigmas, the criminal justice system, public vs privatised health care).

Early evaluation of this experience highlights the fraught nature of pursuing true civic society aims through heritage. As Gargett (2018) reports, participants demonstrated all the signs of dialogue (and, I believe, the precursors to ethical action), including collaborative learning, self-reflection, mutuality, and awareness of others. One participant commented:

‘... you don’t expect on a tour to get this level of depth with strangers, or even with your family... I think that’s fantastic. I think that experience would stick with you for a really long time.’

His opinion was affirmed by others in his tour group; one remarked:

‘...it demonstrated the power of group discussion and how people of different ages, backgrounds... can contribute to an in-depth, meaningful discussion and we are all able to learn things from each other. I felt like everyone had their own personal perceptions challenged at some point and listening to others and their opinions and personal experiences has a big part to play in this.’

However, another commentator (a guide at the Minster) expressed what is arguably the standard institutional response to such agonistic interpretative efforts (after Deufel, 2017):

‘it could actually be quite damaging to people... not just from a mental health perspective but actually from like a political perspective as well. And potentially physical if people start getting very passionate.’

This opinion was further illustrated by another member of the group who, as Gargett (2018) describes it, was,

‘concerned about the harmful nature of discussing contemporary social issues with strangers, suggesting... it should perhaps be marketed as a “difficult histories type thing”. This pertains to the general view that “difficult” issues should only be broached at “difficult history” sites...’

The counterargument here, as broached by others in the same evaluation session, is that *all* sites have difficult histories that can shape people's lives today (and perhaps in future) in different ways. To avoid or suppress these issues in spaces like the Minster (which not only offers multiple layers of pastoral care, but also professes to want to make the world a better place, inspiring transformation amongst both individuals and businesses (Gargett, 2018)) is not only to falsify the site's heritage, but to blatantly cripple the democratic endeavour at large.

These case studies hint at the potential for emotive engagement to be more purposefully deployed in the cultural heritage sector, enchanting the archaeological record such that it reaps an ethic of generosity and considerate action in or on the world. However, the temptation, especially pronounced amongst heritage professionals, to indulge in the kind of 'lazy empathy' (Tucker, 2016: 39 citing Dean, 2005) that has long been characteristic of the heritage sector is palpable. Recalling Loh's (2017) arguments, Tucker (2016: 40) contends that we must 'forego any easy solutions' and, if we enrol empathy in our efforts, it must 'not be viewed as an end in itself, nor... give rise to self-congratulation.'

To genuinely enchant the world may be difficult, especially among professional communities who are saddled with approaches that regularly breed disempowerment and underestimation of the renewability and resilience of the archaeological record. Affective interventions (on our inscription and interpretation practices, on our creative skills, and especially on our abilities to promote dialogue as described above) can overturn these circumstances, exposing archaeology's capacity to inspire reflection and change, today and in the future. However, we must necessarily develop or adapt means to negotiate the challenges that will arise. We already have a wealth of materials on how we might do this in relation to dialogue—from conflict resolution procedures, to methods for reasoning and constructive argumentation, to lessons in fostering respect (e.g. Sennett, 2003; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2018). Some might question whether it is indeed 'our enterprise to socially engineer dialogue' (Morse et al., 2013: 103). I would counter that heritage-related dialogue is already being engineered, often in the absence of any knowledgeable archaeological voice whatsoever, but also by archaeologists themselves without the toolkit to steer such dialogue in a genuinely productive direction. Fredengren (2016: 496) warns that in pursuing the project of archaeological enchantment we also need to be wary of naivety, of seduction by affective powers that could lead to problematic outcomes. The vision I propose here, however, is underlain by the application of informed facilitated discussion and debate. These efforts are concerned with strengthening our abilities to actively listen to and constructively reason with one another. If successful, they should ultimately result in social bonding and mutual respect,



contributing to greater civic welfare. Yet even at the most local and personal level, within small communities of archaeologists for instance, such skills offer the opportunity to speak more productively amongst and beyond ourselves, thereby helping us to collectively identify problems and devise shared solutions. In so doing, we make space for a more empowered, responsive discipline, one that is truly cognisant of, and open to, the infinite possibilities of the archaeological record.

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## **L'enchantement des témoignages archéologiques**

*Les études empiriques révèlent de plus en plus que les sites archéologiques et ceux appartenant au patrimoine culturel sont capables d'engendrer un sens de l'émerveillement, de transformation, d'attachement et de créer des liens entre des communautés comprenant des individus les plus divers. Selon les théories politiques de Jane Bennett, ces sites ont le pouvoir « d'enchanter » et, ce faisant, permettent de promouvoir la générosité, une prise de conscience éthique et un égard accru envers le monde en général. Mais on comprend encore mal comment ce sens de l'enchantement est créé et combien ces rencontres intimes avec le passé préhistorique ou historique peuvent être délibérément réalisées. Les difficultés sont accrues du fait que les professionnels de l'archéologie obstruent souvent le potentiel de l'archéologie en termes d'action éthique. Dans cet article, je propose un modèle comprenant plusieurs éléments conceptuels permettant de produire un sens de l'enchantement par rapport aux témoignages de l'archéologie et destiné autant à une audience de professionnels qu'à un public plus large. Dans le cadre du projet EMOTIVE financé par la Commission européenne, je présente une facette de ce modèle : le dialogue facilité. En dehors d'un examen du rôle de la culture numérique et de son évolution, je soutiens qu'une approche centrée sur l'enchantement est essentielle en archéologie, si l'on veut que cette discipline soit vraiment bénéfique sur le plan social.* Translation by Madeleine Hummler

*Mots-clés :* enchantement en archéologie, émotion, technologies numériques, méthodes archéologiques, musées et sites du patrimoine culturel, pratique professionnelle

## **Eine bezaubernde Archäologie**

*Empirische Studien zeigen zunehmend, dass archäologische Fundplätze und Stätten des Kulturerbes in der Lage sind, uns zu bezaubern, uns zu verändern und ein Gemeinschaftsgefühl zwischen ganz verschiedenen Menschen zu schaffen. Laut der politischen Theorien von Jane Bennett sind diese Stätten fähig, uns zu ‚bezaubern‘ und damit können sie Großzügigkeit, eine ethische Achtsamkeit und eine Sorge für die gesamte Welt fördern. Wie man solch eine Bezauberung erzeugt, und in welchem Ausmaß solche persönlichen Begegnungen mit der urgeschichtlichen oder historischen Vergangenheit verbreitet sind, ist aber kaum bekannt. Die Situation ist dadurch noch verschlechtert, dass die Praxis das Potenzial der Archäologie,*

*ethische Maßnahmen zu fördern, häufig verhindert. In diesem Artikel schlage ich ein vielseitiges Begriffsmodell vor, dass ein Entzücken mit den archäologischen Befunden generiert, sowohl unter Fachleuten und der breiteren Öffentlichkeit. Im Rahmen des von der Europäischen Kommission finanzierten EMOTIVE Projektes verdeutliche ich hier ein Aspekt dieses Modells: der unterstützte Dialog. Neben einer Untersuchung der Rolle der digitalen Kultur und deren Entwicklung wird hier den Standpunkt vertreten, dass wir einen auf Verzauberung orientierten Ansatz folgen müssen und so eine wirklich sozial tragfähige archäologische Disziplin erschaffen.* Translation by Madeleine Hummler

*Stichworte:* archäologische Bezauberung, Gefühl, Digitaltechnologien, archäologische Methoden, Museen und Kulturerbe, berufliche Praxis

### **Figure captions**

**Figure 1.** *Young Archaeologists' Club members participating in an EMOTIVE dialogical experience in Sheffield, UK (photograph: Sierra McKinney).*

**Figure 2.** *Participants enacting egalitarian ways of life in Turkey, one of the EMOTIVE experiences designed for the archaeological site of Çatalhöyük.*

**Figure 3.** *Participants engaged in an EMOTIVE facilitated dialogue session for the York Minster in York, UK.*