Writing Wonders – Poetry as Archaeological Method?

For: TAG Bradford. ‘Tyrannical Tales? Fiction as Archaeological Method’

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*“****Archaeology is*** *the search for fact. Not truth. If its truth you’re interested in, Doctor Tyree’s Philosophy class is right down the hall”.* (Indiana Jones, 1989)

**Fact**, fiction, it’s a dialectical debate that both crosses **and** divides disciplines from archaeology to philosophy. Questions of truth value via authenticity, authority and provenance abound alongside those of definition in theory and practice. However, this paper argues that maybe, on occasion, it really doesn’t matter if we cannot tell fact from **fiction –** assuming that such telling is even possible**.** Instead, theblurring of this normative line may open an intersection in which our minds can engage in alternative ways of thinking than those which our academic and professional training usually dictates.

Poetry sits in this intersection. It affords both the writer and the reader room to explore a variety of perspectives in a succinct form. Akin to a photograph it can be both art and reportage, a snapshot in which to hold a moment or to expand a concept, **empowering us** to “seize back the creative initiative” (Eshun & Madge, 2012). As archaeologists we not only have a responsibility **to** the cultures we are **represent**ing but also to the process by which we achieve this with **one another - and** to **ourselves**. The diktat of site reporting can be at odds with the demotic positon we inhabit as living beings (Pluciennik, 2015) which can strip away the emotional meaning we glean from the wonders we are uncovering **-** and in so doing the whole reason we began archaeology in the first place. Thus perhaps it is time to consider whether or not we can allow ourselves a small platform in which to regain and express the wonder we feel when we hold a pot, discover a mosaic, make a leap of interpretation.

For if we are writing about wonders, can we therefore not do so **wonderfully**?