

a spectrum of degrees of interaction with the palace, and potentially, relative social status (pp. 161, 165–70).

Individuals named in the Pylian records almost certainly engaged in economic activities outside of those that linked them to the palace and may well have played an important role in institutions that operated outside of palatial authority, such as the *dāmos* and religious institutions (pp. 169–72). It is probable that such individuals also accrued significant economic and symbolic benefits through their interactions with the palace, which may have served to further enhance their status in their own communities (pp. 173–76). In addition, the palace benefited from the semi-independent and managerial activities of these people, which would have simplified some aspects of palatial administration (p. 176). Nakassis argues that this sort of parceled delegation of tasks and reliance on local elites may reflect the social and institutional realities within which the palace initially developed and the paths by which some pre-existing resource chains and personal holdings were integrated into the palatial economy (pp. 179–83).

An updated catalog of all possible personal names found at Pylos is found in the extensive appendix. This will be a useful resource for future studies that utilize personal names from Pylos. Each name is listed along with its possible renderings in Greek, the degree of confidence over whether or not it is actually a name, the tablets on which the name appears, the toponyms associated with each occurrence, and the location of that toponym if known. In addition, Nakassis evaluates whether names that appear on multiple tablets are the same individual on his scale of certain, probable, possible, or tenuous, followed by a justification of his designation(s). He also provides a helpful shorthand numerical code to indicate the minimum, maximum, and probable number of individuals represented by each name. A brief description of anything known about the named individuals, including their designated roles on the tablets, is also included as part of each catalog entry.

There are few criticisms to be made about the volume. Typographical and editorial errors are few. Although relevant lines in the tables of chapter 3 are highlighted to help the reader easily find smiths represented in the Cn series, one might wish that the discussion of tablets in chapter 2 would signify more consistently the location of relevant

names. For example, in a discussion of a man named *Komāwens* (*ko-ma-we*) in tablet An 519 (p. 50), the line number is not called out in the text preceding the inscription. Given the short length of the inscriptions, it is a relatively minor problem that is easily overcome. Nakassis mentions the potential problem of heteronymy at the beginning of his discussion of methodology in chapter 2 (pp. 35–36), but unlike homonymy, the case for and against heteronymy as a feature of the Pylian texts is not pursued in detail. This does not seem to be a major omission, however, since heteronymy seems to have been less important in previous studies than concerns over homonymy.

This book offers a significant new way of thinking about how elite Mycenaean individuals interacted with palatial institutions. Nakassis provides a nuanced perspective on how the palatial system and Mycenaean society were interwoven and how these people and institutions functioned in relation to each other. Given the high quality of both the data and the analysis, the book will be a valuable resource for specialists in the study of the Aegean Bronze Age and will serve as a useful case study for scholars interested more broadly in the organization and operation of early states.

***Subjects and Narratives in Archaeology.* Edited by Ruth M. Van Dyke and Reinhard Bernbeck.**

Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015. Pp. 299, 69 illustrations. Paperback, \$23.95. ISBN 9781607323877.

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## The Premise

*This is not a standard book review. But the book in question explores alternative, literary ways of presenting archaeology. How could a reviewer turn down the chance to put their ideas into practice? Except Allen and Ellis, the modern characters in this dialogue are fictitious, no matter how much they sound like the person you share an office with. Even Ellis's words are invented, though she has read them and agreed they are*

*things she might have said. If you think archaeological writing should stick to explicating complex section drawings, then you should consider skipping this and moving on to the next review. You wouldn't like the book anyway.*

## The Book Review Panel

**Ahmad al-Rahim (AA-R)**, an invented PhD student in anthropology at Berkeley, or maybe Stanford. Has a BA in media studies and an MA in creative writing at some Midwestern university before stumbling into an archaeological project in Cyprus and getting hooked. Field supervisor on the PI's current project.

**Mitchell Allen (MA)**, Book Review Editor of *JEMAHS* and former publisher of AltaMira Press and Left Coast Press.

**Dido**, a Neolithic woman buried in Feature E634 at Çatalhöyük, described by Ruth Tringham (p. 40) as part of the Last House on the Hill Project ([http://lasthouseonthehill.org/system/files/atoms/file/ObjectStories\\_RET\\_010316\\_preprint\\_Web.pdf](http://lasthouseonthehill.org/system/files/atoms/file/ObjectStories_RET_010316_preprint_Web.pdf)).

**Carolyn Ellis (CE)**, leading figure in alternative presentation of ethnography, Distinguished Professor of Communication, University of South Florida.

**Jennifer Lee (JL)**, another fictional PhD student in al-Rahim's cohort. More traditional background: BA degree in anthropology from an unnamed research university in Pennsylvania. Regularly attends ASOR and SAA. Also works on PI's current project.

**Flinders Petrie's ghost (FP)**, a shadow of the founder of scientific archaeology.

**The Principal Investigator (PI)**, a composite senior archaeologist who runs a large excavation project in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

## The Setting

*Departmental lounge at a university somewhere in the United States. You've been in many of them. Once painted off white, now a dingy off white. "Franz Boas Room" seen in reverse on the glass door panel. Various photos and posters on the wall of places where faculty members had done their Othering in the*

*past. A couch, equally musty and dusty, rests against one wall, badly in need of replacement. Had it charged money each time a grad student slept on it, it would have been reupholstered long ago. Other chairs and armchairs in equally desperate condition scattered about the room. Copies of Current Anthropology and Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology cover a few of the many gouges and stains on the coffee table. Windows haven't been cleaned for a while, thus showing only bits of a beautiful university quad with lush green trees and expansive walkways. Mounted on one wall is a 64" computer screen. Below it a desk and a Lenovo laptop. Al-Rahim sits at the laptop with his fingers floating quickly over the keyboard.*

## The Discussion

*All but the PI enter. As Dido walks in, Ruth Tringham's website Last House on the Hill (<https://vimeo.com/152111043?from=outro-local>) flashes onto the screen. "EEEEEE!!!!" Dido shrieks in fright and quickly touches her forehead, both cheeks, and chin with an index finger for protection. Lee steps over quickly and holds onto her elbow. It calms her. Fright turns to wariness, then wonder. Petrie, immediately behind her, mutters something unprintable in Middle Egyptian and begins furiously stroking his beard.*

**AA-R:** (*getting up from his chair and going over to Dido*) Sorry if I scared you, but I knew you were from Çatalhöyük and wanted to show you the hypertext that Ruth Tringham created about your home. She describes it in the book we will be discussing as one way of sharing archaeology with a broader audience.

**Dido:** I know those homes. How did they come here? Did you call to them? Are you a healer?

**AA-R:** No, I'm not a shaman, just a graduate student. The shaman lives inside this small black box. Her name is Intel. (*JL snorts in laughter*)

**MA:** Thank you all for joining me here. I have been asked to review the edited collection *Subjects and Narratives in Archaeology*, which deals with literary ways of presenting archaeology. I thought that getting feedback from a diverse group who would view this book through different lenses would be useful to the readers of the journal.

**FP:** Nice to be back on a university campus again.

**Dido:** You've explained books and reading to me, fascinating. A wonderful way to preserve stories. But we receive our stories from the Mother and tell them to our children over and over as they grow up. They will tell them to their children. It has always been that way.

**PI:** (*barges in late. Harummphs. You know him, you have all had him teaching your Thursday afternoon seminars. The word "rumpled" comes to mind immediately. Feel free to add a tweed jacket and pipe if you really want to caricature him.*) What are all these people doing here? I thought I was critiquing a book with a couple of my grad students. These people look dressed for Halloween. Is this a joke? Or am I having a dream?

**FP:** It's literature. Many writers put characters together who never historically met in order to make a point. I saw a couple West End plays by Bernard Shaw like that. Some archaeologists in the book use this device. It's not so unusual. Back when I was starting out, it was common for my scientific colleagues to write literary accounts of their work as well as scientific descriptions. One of those young London chaps, Mallowan, even married himself a mystery writer and took her with him to Brak. Can't imagine she was very good at cataloguing or repairing vessels.

**CE:** I think that's one of the points of the book, to extend beyond the traditional realistic archaeological narrative to show what you can do when you add fiction or creative non-fiction to your interpretations and write-ups of research. This has been happening in other social science fields for 25 years. Look at the work of Bud Goodall (2006) or Laurel Richardson (2013) or my own (Ellis 2009) for examples.

**PI:** (*suddenly realizing who the distinguished Victorian gentleman is*) I always wished I could have had the chance to meet you, Sir Flinders, so this is quite an honor. But I thought you would be a bit more, er, fleshy and less spectral.

**FP:** Apologies. I realize archaeologists spend a lot of time explaining to the public that there is no archaeological evidence for ghosts, Atlanteans, or aliens, but I'm afraid that's what you get when you drift into alternative modes of presentation.

**PI:** So what is the point of all this? Mark Pluciennik notes in the book that we normally "write as authoritative specialists presenting neutral, objective truths" (p. 12). That is science. This is fluff. Two of the key advocates for storytelling, Mary and Adrian Praetzelis, even say in their chapter that our creative efforts only begin "after the donkeywork of archaeological excavation and lab analysis, the archival research, and the ordinary contextualization and interpretation" (p. 127). They call it "extra credit" (p. 123).

**AA-R:** But they also say that "People like people" (p. 124). Without storytelling of the sort described in the book, what we do is meaningless to anyone beyond the few other specialists like ourselves. Part of our role is to include a larger universe of people in our understandings of the past. That universe doesn't speak our specialized language.

**FP:** For all the site reports I wrote, I was careful to write books for a general audience as well. I think it helped bring recognition, support, and funding to our archaeological work. I'm sure the same would be true today. I can modestly confess that I even published some poetry in my time (Petrie 1931: 113). I think the editors of the volume identify other reasons for using alternative modes of presentation, including a way out of "the two-dimensional world of data and into the multidimensional world of sensory life" (p. 3) as it is experienced by people who live those lives.

**Dido:** (*pulling herself away from the computer screen that she had been closely following*) But do you think you understand the lives of our people? I see these pictures of my town that Ruth Tringham created. Sometimes she seemed to understand our lives. At other times, she is very wrong. She told me she tried to imagine how we lived "from many years of fieldwork in the countryside of southeast Europe and Anatolia, as well as broad reading of ethnographies and histories" (p. 37). But we did not live in her time. How can she know?

**CE:** Another reason for literary presentation of research is mentioned by one of the contributors, James G. Gibb. In his archaeological plays his characters' "fictional interactions within a partially reconceived cultural context will lead me to previously unrecognized relationships and attitudes and potential material residues of those patterns" (p. 152). Sarah Nelson makes a similar

observation (p. 218). Other social scientists call this “writing as inquiry,” you find insights into your work in the process of writing about it (Richardson 1994).

**MA:** Much as I am doing with this review, creating its shape through the interaction between these characters. Had I chosen different characters, it would have been a different conversation.

**AA-R:** But at least you show what you’re doing, not just tell. So many of the chapters described how to present this kind of material in differing formats: novels, vignettes, plays, performance art, musical compositions, film, photography, virtual realities, hypertexts, and websites (p. 1). But do they follow through with those alternative formats and accomplish their goal? The contributors were more comfortable talking about how to represent research in these formats than showing it in action, though the value of presenting archaeology this way can only be demonstrated in its execution. Particularly the electronic projects. It was impossible to judge them, as a book can only describe and show screen shots. A book like this should have been done in an electronic format to accommodate its range of media.

**MA:** Ahmad, as a former publisher, I can tell you there are lots of technical complications in doing multimedia projects.

But my concern is much the same as yours. At AltaMira and Left Coast I received proposals for novels and alternative literary forms from archaeologists regularly. To do creative writing well—whether fiction or non-fiction—requires a lot of skill and training. Most of the projects I reviewed might have been good archaeology but not good literature, or the reverse. Very few could match the standards of quality from both disciplines. I did handle novels by Sarah Nelson (1999) and Adrian Praetzelis (2000), who both contribute to this collection, and by Rob Swigart (2007), who was added to the Çatalhöyük project as the “staff novelist.” I even published an archaeological comic book (Loubser 2003). I declined to publish others because they were not archaeological enough or sufficiently good literature.

**JL:** This is true of some of the literary works in the book. Not all of them were compelling. The editors even raise this

question: “should we then leave the storytelling to professional storytellers?” (p. 3) It’s not like there aren’t a lot of fictional interpretations of the past: Auel, Mailer, Michener. The Fictional Rome website lists almost 1,500 novels set just in that single time and place (<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=78&pageID=24&action=dsall&type=1>). So do we really need to be doing this too? Maybe we do. Jonathan T. Thomas points out that these stories will be written by others if we don’t write them ourselves, and likely told badly or incorrectly (p. 172).

**CE:** Dido, Jennifer read to you the stories in the various chapters. Which did you like?

**Dido:** The piece that sang the kindest song was the one by Philip and Judy Tuwaletsiwa. Though their land is far from mine, they spoke of the same things and their songs could have been those of my people: “The sound of corn growing is a farmer singing, the wind scattering his words across his field” (p. 106). And the paintings showed their people, their stories, their land. I would like to visit their land. (*She begins to softly hum a song that has not been heard for 9000 years.*)

**AA-R:** It is called Hopi. These Hopi writers and artists were the only non-archaeologists who showcased projects in the book. I am sure they would welcome your visit.

**JL:** The chapter presents the lived experience of specific Hopi people. This is much different than a typical archaeological approach, which flattens individual lives into generations, centuries, and arbitrary time periods, as Doug Bailey and Melanie Simpkin point out (p. 190).

**CE:** Other social scientists describe the richness of individual lives through interviews and direct observations, which is not an option for archaeologists.

**PI:** But what about the ethical issues? How does the reader know what is fact and what is fiction? How do we presume to speak for people of the distant past? The post-processualist down the hall will scream out “colonialism!” (*Another harummph escapes his lips.*) And if we give up our authority as objective scientists, why should we be listened to beyond any of the quacks peddling pseudoarchaeology?

**AA-R:** All excellent questions. Ethics is one of the key issues in the book. Each chapter has a different answer



as to how to signal to the reader what is data, what is based on data, and what is drawn from an informed imagination. Most of the contributors believe that these distinctions are crucial and allow us to be literary while still claiming that we are doing archaeology. They offer a wide range of strategies on how to create those separations, which is one of the best elements of the book. I also liked that the authors clearly read each of the others' contributions and reacted to them in their own writing.

**CE:** Reinhard Bernbeck's chapter (chapter 12) does point to the danger of perpetuating colonialism in speaking for the Other. This is true even when we work with subjects who live in our own culture and with whom we can check our interpretations. Ethnographers use an ethic of care and, ever more often, try to collaborate with the people we are writing about to ensure that their voices are included (Ellis 2009: 16). As archaeologists, you can't speak with your subjects, but you can sometimes speak with their descendants.

**JL:** And ethically, maybe we should try to represent them. These are usually marginalized people of the past, not included in historical writing, people who can no longer speak for themselves. We are the only voices "that can help past peoples defend a modicum of standing in the present," according to the editors (p. 20).

**Dido:** I was pleased that Ruth Tringham spoke about me in her wall pictures to all of the people who do not live in my town. I feel that they will remember me as my children and grandchildren did.

**AA-R:** We do not speak for you Dido, but help connect your life to people who want to know more about you. Pluciennik says: "We should act as mediators and facilitators of meaningful conversations—those in which we genuinely attempt to present, exchange, listen to, and amend views" (p. 67).

**PI:** So, in addition to raising the funds, organizing the logistics, managing a hundred volunteers, supervising multiple labs, and producing detailed site reports, I need to become as good as Michener at writing novels? I should tell my students to study literature, not archaeology (*one final harummph*).

**CE:** But consider the bravery of these authors in even attempting to break out of the hegemony of third-person expository texts. As with any other skill, you get better with time. Archaeology is in its nascence in this area. In another decade, these writers will be much better at presenting their work. And there will be more of them. I've been doing alternative ethnographic writing for three decades and I think I'm much better at it now than when I wrote my first piece. These people should be encouraged for their attempts, not criticized for their shortcomings.

**MA:** Thank you, all of you, for these incisive thoughts. Should archaeologists do this kind of work? Can they do it well enough to be worth the effort? Are there exemplars and guidelines to follow? The authors in this volume anguish over all these questions and provide the answers that have emerged from their working in these modes. Readers can decide whether their answers have merit. But, with all the questions that have been raised about the value, relevance, and meaning of archaeology in recent years, this is one direction that should not be ignored.

*(Exeunt all, except al-Rahim, whose dissertation chapter three is due to the PI in two days and who will likely be sleeping on that couch tonight when he can no longer keep his eyes open. He considers rewriting the chapter as poetry. A deep sigh. Then he starts typing again, "In locus 3442, a set of sherds were recovered from the 1 x 1 meter trial square. . .")*

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