

# REVISTA DE ARQUEOLOGIA

Volume 34 No. 2 Maio – Agosto 2021

ARTICLE

## ENDGAME: CONTEMPLATING ARCHAEOLOGY'S DEMISE

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### ABSTRACT

Scholars have been contemplating archaeology's demise for two decades. In this paper, we examine their critiques and predict that archaeologists will continue promoting archaeology—while ignoring its core problems—until such time that governments stop empowering archaeologists and archaeology becomes socially and economically untenable. While not in imminent peril, archaeologists have begun restorying archaeology's future by recasting themselves as enchanted missionaries that are healing the world.

**Keywords:** critical archaeology; future studies; enchantment-disenchantment.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24885/sab.v34i2.896>

## O FIM DO JOGO: CONTEMPLANDO O DESAPARECIMENTO DA ARQUEOLOGIA

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### RESUMO

Os acadêmicos têm contemplado o desaparecimento da arqueologia por duas décadas. Neste artigo, examinamos algumas das críticas realizadas no decorrer desse período e a partir disso predizemos que os arqueólogos continuarão a promover a arqueologia — enquanto ignoram seus problemas centrais — até que os governos parem de dar poder aos arqueólogos e a arqueologia se torne social e economicamente insustentável. Embora não esteja em perigo iminente, os arqueólogos começaram a recontar o futuro da arqueologia, transformando-se em missionários encantados que estão curando o mundo.

**Palavras-chave:** arqueologia crítica; estudos futuros; encantamento-desencantamento.

## EL FINAL DEL JUEGO: CONTEMPLANDO LA DESAPARICIÓN DE LA ARQUEOLOGÍA

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### RESUMEN

Los académicos han estado contemplando la desaparición de la arqueología durante dos décadas. En este artículo examinamos sus críticas y predecimos que los arqueólogos continuarán promoviendo la arqueología—mientras ignoran sus problemas centrales—hasta que los gobiernos dejen de empoderar a los arqueólogos y la arqueología se vuelva social y económicamente insostenible. Si bien no se encuentran en peligro inminente, los arqueólogos han comenzado a narrar de nuevo el futuro de la arqueología transformándose en misioneros encantados que están sanando el mundo.

**Palabras-clave:** arqueología crítica; estudios futuros; encantamiento-desencantamiento.

## INTRODUCTION

The future is ancient: prophecy, forecasting and foresight are as old as recorded human history. (GODHE; GOODE, 2018, p. 151)

The twentieth anniversary of Laurajane Smith's (1999) groundbreaking article 'The last archaeologist' came and went without mention in 2019. This should surprise no one as truly critical discussion of archaeology's future is rare (HÖGBERG *et al.*, 2017; HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2019a, 2019b; SPENNEMAN, 2007a, 2007b). Rarer still are discussions of archaeology's demise (SMITH, 1999; SMITH; WATERTON, 2009; WURST, 2019). That gap is the focus of this paper, which is rooted in critical future studies and sociology (GODHE; GOODE, 2018; TUTTON, 2017) and building on our previous work on anxiety and sustainable archaeology (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2019a, 2019b).

In this paper, we focus on the growing movement in global archaeology towards narratives of enchantment—alluring and celebratory stories of archaeology as a force for good. Our concern is with how archaeologists respond to critiques of their discipline—or, in another sense, how they fail to respond. We argue that enchanting archaeology allows its adherents to avoid or 'forget' critiques that threaten its identity, authority and very existence—critiques such as Smith (1999) responded to when she boldly confronted archaeology's end. The result of forgetting is an affirmation of archaeology's 'goodness' and status quo, thereby limiting the potential for meaningful change.

We begin by looking at some of the critiques of archaeology that have been made over the last several decades. Collectively, these challenges have led archaeologists to an existential precipice or reckoning where they must face difficult realities and determine how to proceed. Facing such disenchantment, archaeologists are spurred to change archaeology's story—today seen in enchanted archaeology. While we consider the possibility of a future without archaeologists, our assessment leads us to predict not the death of archaeology but of discourse that is critical of archaeology.

## CRITICAL FUTURES

Criticism is the primary tool archaeologists use to express disenchantment and change the future (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2019a; LEONE *et al.*, 1987; PINSKY; WYLIE, 1989; ROLLER *et al.*, 2014; SHANKS; TILLEY, 1987; SMITH, 2004; WILKIE; BARTOY, 2000; WURST 2014). It follows, then, that enchanted archaeology is a response to a particular kind of disenchantment and critique. In this section, we outline what we see as the five most important kinds of archaeological critiques and disenchantment: effectual; environmental; ethical; legal; and philosophical. As sources of disenchantment, these are what motivate people most to try and change archaeology—or try to end it.

*EFFECTUAL*

Some scholars want to change archaeology's future because they believe archaeology is ineffectual in achieving its two main objectives of knowing the past and protecting the archaeological record. Where the first concerns the effectiveness of archaeological science, the second is about the efficacy of cultural resource management (CRM).

As experts, archaeologists pride themselves on their ability to interpret the past, but they have yet to demonstrate that a truly scientific, objective archaeology is possible (SHANKS; TILLEY, 1987). What if, as sociologists tell us (BERGER; LUCKMANN,

1966), archaeology is a social construction? What if, as Hawkes (1967) famously observed, “Every generation has the Stonehenge it deserves—or desires” (HAWKES, 1967, p. 174)? As Smith (1999, p. 2004) points out, archaeologists promote archaeology as an impartial science that is concerned with seeking the truth about the past for the benefit of all humanity; however, they routinely ignore the fact that it is an apparatus of the state and therefore fundamentally tied to and swayed by political and social interests. Unable to transcend the surly bonds of subjectivity and historical relativity to become neutral, objective, apolitical observers of the past, the result is that archaeologists may not be more qualified or better at ‘knowing the past’ than anyone else, which calls into question the need for archaeologists. ‘The last archaeologist’ is a future that may still be realised.

Excluding the addition of modern material remains, the archaeological record is a finite resource, which means that, at some point in the future, there will be nothing left to find. Indeed, archaeologists modeling trends in archaeological site discovery have already concluded that rates of discovery are in decline, and some segments of the record are near depletion (SUROVELL *et al.* 2017, p. 288). Unfortunately, cultural resource management, the go-to approach to conservation, is demonstrably ineffective at protecting heritage sites and landscapes (e.g., GNECCO, 2018; HUTCHINGS, 2017; KING, 2009). Yet, it remains unclear whether protecting the archaeological record is actually a goal of the discipline; as Flannery (1982) famously concluded, “Archaeology is the only branch of anthropology where we kill our informants in the process of studying them” (FLANNERY, 1982, p. 275). The practice of archaeology is therefore predicated on the destruction of heritage sites and landscapes.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL

Some scholars want to change archaeology’s future because they believe it harms the natural environment insofar as most archaeology today (>90%) is performed as CRM. By authorising heritage landscape clearance in advance of economic development, CRM archaeologists permit—and profit from—environmental destruction (GNECCO 2018; HUTCHINGS 2017, 2018). Part and parcel of CRM archaeology is the fragmentation and dislocation of communities and their subjugation to the will of the state (SMITH, 2004, 2012). This debate about archaeology and resource management in South America is now a decade old (DA ROCHA *et al.*, 2013; GNECCO, 2018; GNECCO; DIAS, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; HAMILAKIS, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; JOFRÉ, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; LIMA, 2012; RIBEIRO, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; ROCABADO, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; SILVA, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; SMITH, 2012).

To distance themselves from that critique, archaeologists routinely omit CRM from their definitions and assessments of archaeology (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; LA SALLE; HUTCHINGS, 2016). Reflecting on that glaring omission, Ferris and Dent (2020) link archaeology’s underlying institutional anxiety to the disconnect between how academics portray archaeology and how it is actually practiced. As CRM, archaeology serves primarily as “commercial conservation management”, a fact that is “readily evident by the numbers of practitioners, sites consumed, and revenues generated” (FERRIS; DENT, 2020, p. 33).

CRM archaeology is thus much more consequential in society than academic archaeology. Yet, it is not just CRM that is tied to environmentally-damaging industry. Recent exchanges on the World Archaeological Congress listserve have highlighted the entangled relationship between academic archaeology and economic development, where large corporations destroy heritage sites with one hand and fund archaeological research (and conferences) with the other.

Capitalism and corporatism—and the environmental and human destruction those ideologies produce (BODLEY, 2008a, 2008b; FOSTER *et al.*, 2010; MAGDOFF; FOSTER, 2011)—are defining qualities of Western education (SPRING, 2019), which includes archaeology (HUTCHINGS, in press). As Wurst and Novinger (2011) explain,

Our education system privileges objective knowledge with a single truth—truth that is supposed to be unbiased and nonpolitical. Freire (1986) called this the banking system of education, where trivial facts, or what Novinger and O'Brien (2003) call “boring, meaningless shit”, are deposited into students brains; Macedo (1994, p. 9) refers to it as “education for stupification”. Our system of education is “intent on reducing the population to obedient clones who work and who consume, but who never question the powers that be” (NOVINGER; O'BRIEN 2003, p. 4). Goodman and Saltman (2002, p. 8) make it chillingly clear: “corporate values currently provide the conceptual basis through which schooling is understood. [...] The corporatized school prepares for the corporatist future”. (WURST AND NOVINGER, 2011, p. 265–266).

Embedded in dominant ideology and the Western school model (HUTCHINGS, in press), archaeology's overarching goal becomes “celebrating the virtues of capitalism” (WURST; NOVINGER 2011, p. 264).

#### ETHICAL

As a result, some scholars want to change archaeology's future because they believe it violates core ethical principles around respect, justice, and concern for the welfare of communities who feel connected to heritage places and objects (see, for example, HUTCHINGS, 2017; SMITH, 1999, 2004). At issue here is the authority asserted by archaeologists and reinforced by government.

Most archaeologists believe in “rigorous science, and its inherent intellectual authority, and expect to have ‘rights’ over material culture often denied to others” (SMITH 1999, p. 30). Yet, while archaeology emphasises the material record, heritage is largely intangible and socially constructed in the present (SHANKS, 2012; SHANKS; TILLEY, 1987; SMITH, 2004; SMITH; WATERTON 2009). This means that archaeological practice affects elements that are central to social identity and culture, but does not usually prioritise the wellbeing of those affected communities.

Indeed, some scholars argue that CRM is a technology of government used to control people's cultural identity (SMITH, 1999, 2004, 2012) and natural resources (GNECCO 2018; GNECCO; DIAS, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2015a, 2015b, 2017a;). This reinforces archaeological authority, which necessarily undermines the autonomy and consent of communities. In challenging that authority and those rights, “what it ‘means’ to ‘be’ an archaeologist becomes open to critical scrutiny” (SMITH, 1999, p. 30). Such arguments have led some to propose taking archaeology out of heritage altogether (SMITH; WATERTON, 2009).

#### LEGAL

Some scholars want to change archaeology's future because they believe it is legally or quasi-legally criminal (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2017b; UNITED NATIONS, 2007). What counts as legal is typically decided by the state, such that archaeology conducted with state permission is legal, even if harmful. Yet, there are other values and policies that

can be drawn upon to evaluate the ‘legality’ of archaeology, including international policies and cultural or community law. By these standards, the impact of even state-sanctioned archaeology may be deemed criminal “in the sense of violence causing social injury, which includes social, psychological, spiritual, and emotional harms among others” (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2017b, p. 75). Archaeology is therefore heritage crime when its conduct violates cultural norms.

#### *PHILOSOPHICAL*

Many arguments for changing archaeology are philosophical, including those that focus on its enlightenment foundations of modernity (THOMAS, 2004), colonialism (McNIVEN; RUSSELL, 2005; SMITH, 1999, 2004, 2012) and capitalism (COSTELLO, 2021; HAMILAKIS, 2015A, 2015B, 2017; HAMILAKIS; DUKE, 2006; WURST, 2019). Insofar as modernity gave rise to archaeology, modernity’s end will be archaeology’s end.

Other philosophical reasons for changing archaeology’s future include the common knowledge problem and survivor bias. The common knowledge problem occurs when archaeologists no longer share common beliefs about the problems, goals and purposes of archaeology. Writing in the 1980s, Zubrow (1989) concluded that, given the “sheer number of practitioners and sub-specialties” and the “lack of a broad, overarching theory, it is not surprising that many archaeologists believe there is no organised pattern to theoretical archaeology and that the discipline is in disarray” (ZUBROW, 1989, p. 47). The common knowledge problem means that archaeologists are free to define archaeology however they see fit—by excluding CRM, for example—as no agreed-upon definition exists.

Survivor bias is the logical error produced when observers consider only people and information that has passed or ‘survived’ some benchmark while ignoring people and information that has not. Archaeology, for example, is written almost exclusively by people who have been indoctrinated into the ideology of archaeology (BERNBECK; MCGUIRE, 2011; HUTCHINGS, 2018, in press; WURST; NOVINGER, 2011). The assumption is that contemporary archaeological discourse accounts for—and thus reflects—all available information and perspectives. In reality, survivor bias erases dissenting views and produces overly optimistic outlooks (LA SALLE; HUTCHINGS, 2016, 2018; see, for example, GUTTMANN-BOND, 2019). The result is the end of critical discourse in archaeology, replaced with something entirely different, discussed below.

#### DISCUSSION: A TALE OF TWO ARCHAEOLOGIES

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair... (DICKENS, 1859, p. 1)

Hyperpartisanship is late modernity’s handmaiden. That elevated devotion in archaeology is reflected in the expanding philosophical gulf that separates archaeology’s enchanted masses from its disenchanted critics. The critiques presented above lead archaeologists to an existential precipice: how do archaeologists proceed? While archaeology’s adherents venerate and market the practice as progressive, its disenchanted critics—along with their critiques—seem to just fade away.



## ENCHANTED FUTURES

Archaeologists' interest in critical theory appears to have peaked in the 1980s with Shanks and Tilley's *Social archaeology* (1987) and Pinsky and Wylie's *Critical traditions* (1989) (for discussion, see BERNBECK; MCGUIRE, 2011, p. 55–58). Since that time, archaeological discourse has moved away from critical self-reflection toward more benign or celebratory narratives, culminating today in enchantment. Part of a larger (re)enchantment movement in postmodern social theory (e.g., BAUMAN, 1992; BENNETT, 2001, 2010; BERMAN, 1981; LANDY; SALER, 2009; RITZER, 2010), Perry (2019) defines enchantment in archaeology as the process where negative “archaeological crisis narratives” are replaced with positive stories that engender “wonder, transformation, attachment, and community bonding amongst diverse individuals” (PERRY, 2019, p. 354).

Scholars have considered enchantment in/and/of heritage (DYER, 2007; FREDENGREN, 2016; GRAHAM, 2020; MÁRMOL *et al.*, 2015; SELWYN, 2007; STAIFF, 2014) and, although she does not cite the work, Perry's (2019) paper is preceded by Staiff's 2014 book *Re-imagining Heritage Interpretation: Enchanting the Past-Future*. In his concluding chapter, Staiff (2014) re-imagines heritage interpretation as “a whole ensemble of interactions and responses” producing “embodied emotional states that we sometimes language with words like ‘wonder’, ‘rapture’, ‘awe’ and ‘enchantment’” (STAIFF, 2014, p. 161). That Staiff (2014) connects enchantment to “knowledge”, “exploration” and “the unknown” (STAIFF, 2014, p. 1) is a key point that we will return to later.

Mármol *et al.* (2015, p. 3) set disenchantment in opposition not to enchantment *per se* but seduction and its “alluring discourses and representations” of heritage. Seduction works in heritage by “casting an idealised version of the possibilities inherent in the recovery and preservation of specific versions of the past”:

The rationale of seduction mobilises a variety of representational spaces and discursive devices that are oriented to specific goals, such as those linked to identity politics, economic profit or even both. In each case, they act upon different levels, ranging from local actors to global institutions, from cultural and tourism entrepreneurs to their hostage audiences. (MÁRMOL *et al.*, 2015, p. 4-6).

Seduction ultimately “leads us into the field of the unknown as it captivates our senses while appealing to our intimate desires for fulfillment” (MÁRMOL *et al.*, 2015, p. 5).

Armed with the power to enchant, archaeologists today are being rebranded as “seedbeds of human generosity, ethical mindfulness, and care for the world at large”; their work produces “positive outcomes ranging from mental well-being through to restoration, personal satisfaction, family bonding, and pro-social behavioural change” (PERRY, 2019, p. 354). One category of enchanted futures discourse is remedial or rehabilitation archaeology. Rather than harming people and the environment, archaeology is imagined as bringing people together and nurturing and healing them via, for example, ‘therapeutic archaeology’ and ‘heart-centred archaeology’.

North American therapeutic archaeologists Schaepe *et al.* (2017, p. 503–504) consider archaeology an “antidote” for Indigenous people to a wide range of modern psychosocial problems, including those pertaining to:

- belonging, relatedness and interconnectedness;
- notions of identity, self and continuity;
- relationships with land, place, country and territory;

- political ecology and environmental impacts.

Schaepe *et al.* (2017, p. 516) maintain that, as a material-based discipline,

archaeology provides an ideal process for reconnecting and reestablishing personal placement within a meaningful 'home,' building communal strength and human capital by literally piecing things back together—linking dislocated peoples with the tangible and intangible reckoning of their world and worldview. Re-'placing', reconnecting, rerouting, getting back 'in touch' with, finding meaning in the world, reestablishing home—all such notions carry cyclical metaphors of returning and reconnecting. And these can all be outcomes of archaeology when consciously pursued as a therapeutic practice. (SCHAEPE *et al.* 2017, p. 516)

Along with making archaeology meaningful, the main objective of therapeutic archaeology is "influencing the future" (SCHAEPE *et al.*, 2017, p. 516).

Remedying the traumatic experiences and life-changing physical injuries of British Armed Forces veterans, European therapeutic archaeologists Everill *et al.* (2020, p. 212) consider archaeological excavation a "non-medical intervention" that can reduce the occurrence of "anxiety, depression and feelings of isolation" while providing "a greater sense of being valued". Similarly, Dobat *et al.* (2020, p. 370) promote the therapeutic values of metal detecting, which can positively influence "well-being and happiness for people suffering from mental health problems":

The findings suggest that practitioners feel that metal detecting has a significantly positive and lasting effect on their health and well-being. A significant number of respondents feel that metal detecting has alleviated specific symptoms of their mental disorders (PTSD, depression, anxiety disorders). The key factors for the beneficial effect of metal detecting appear to be of a mental, sensory, physical and social nature. (DOBAT *et al.*, 2020, p. 370)

Paralleling therapeutic archaeology is heart-centred archaeology, which involves an "archaeology of the heart" that "speaks to the whole person—our intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical selves":

We aim to put heart into our understandings of the past by reframing our analyses to consider the powerful roles of emotion, love, and connection [and by taking] the best of what our whole selves offer and make an archaeology that makes us better people, better archaeologists, and a kinder and more inclusive community of practice. (LYONS; SUPERNANT 2020, p. 1)

In 'I ♥ archaeology', heart-centred archaeologist Welch (2020, p. 36–37) posits that future archaeologies will be

gentler and more readily and fearlessly traveled to the extent that we can cultivate wholehearted emotional intentions and fuse these with incisive intellectual pursuits and impeccably ethical and altruistic practice. Commitments to open-eyed, open-minded, open-armed, and open-hearted archaeologies are sturdy and splendid foundations for maintaining and accelerating extra-disciplinary influence along with exceptional recent disciplinary growth, diversity, and inclusivity. (WELCH, 2020, p. 36–37)



These are lofty and often confusing and contradictory ambitions, yet they align with other scholars such as Guttman-Bond (2010, 2019) whose ‘love’ for archaeology inspires her belief that “archaeology can save the planet”. Enchantment thus positions archaeologists as missionaries and archaeology as mission work.

Perry (2019) concludes that enchantment will be popular in the future because “the archaeological sector begs for a model of practice that escapes conventional discourses in order to constructively impact on the present and future”, thus giving archaeologists “a more accommodating, less cynical social purpose” (PERRY, 2019, p. 355, 360). Such ‘escape’, however, does not necessarily reflect meaningful change, nor does it alter the conditions that prompted critique, as we discuss next.

### *DISENCHANTED FUTURES*

Archaeologists today describe having “chronic anxieties fuelling an ongoing, internal angst” (FERRIS; DENT, 2020, p. 35) resulting in a “pre-apocalyptic feel” (ROSENZWEIG, 2020, p. 284). Such worries are not surprising given that uncertainty about the future is endemic both in late modern society, which Niedzwiecki (2015) calls an “anxiety factory” (NIEDZVIECKI, 2015, p. 191, 217), and in the university, where “a climate of perverse incentives and hypercompetition” constitutes “the new normal” (EDWARDS; ROY, 2016, p. 51; see also BERG *et al.*, 2016; HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE 2019a, 2019b). Yet, contrary to what has been claimed, enchantment remedies neither archaeology’s problems nor modernity’s problems. Its primary function, rather, is to whitewash disenchantment.

Enchantment is specifically designed to replace negative archaeological crisis narratives that are “debilitating for archaeologists” and lack appeal (PERRY, 2019, p. 356). Perry (2019) considers stories about heritage loss and destruction (e.g. SMITH, 1999) to be a “key source of professional disenchantment” and “cynicism” that “strips wonder” from archaeology; it promotes a belief that is “not only generative of resentment and hopelessness in the face of seeming inevitability, but it is simplistic” (PERRY, 2019, p. 356). All told, Perry (2019) applies and/or implies the following terms and attributes to disenchantment and, by extension, to the disenchanted: conventional; cynical; debilitating; destructive; homogenous; hopeless; negative; resentful; simplistic; unaccommodating; unappealing; uncaring; unethical; ungenerous.

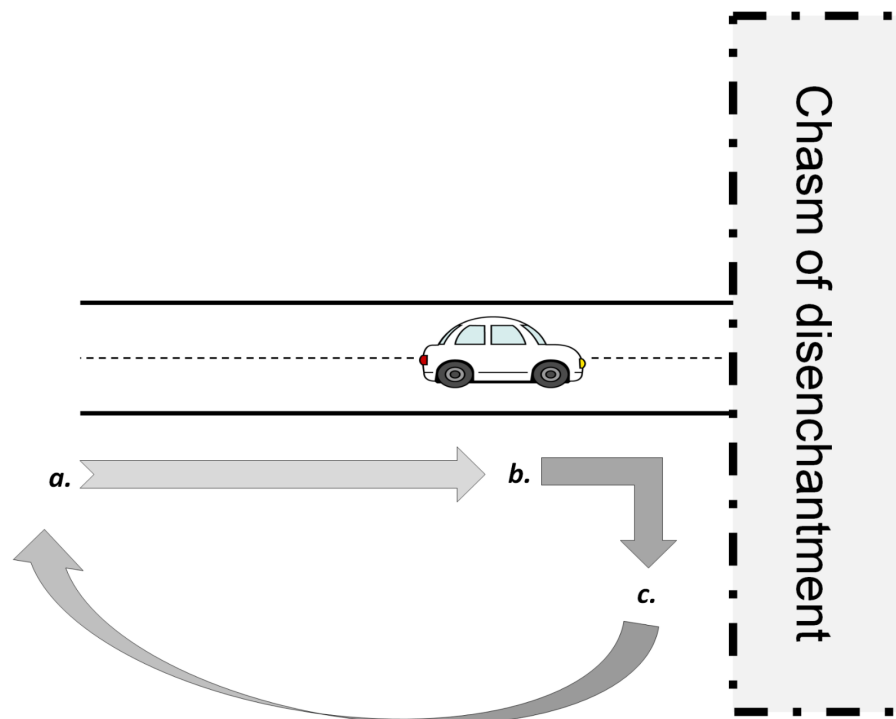
Such language is significant because it is employed by archaeologists when they seek to shut down and shut out those who are critical of archaeology. We are familiar with this in our own experiences publishing where reviewers have called our work, for example, “negative”, “stark” and “anti-intellectual” (HUTCHINGS, 2017, p. xiii); one suggested, “It is a poor archaeologist that does not have a positive view of the discipline” (LA SALLE; HUTCHINGS, 2018, p. 232), and another simply said, “Don’t rock the boat” (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2019b, p. 1672). One reviewer was clear about their interests: “We want to hear about heritage theory and practice, not the sorry state of the world” (LA SALLE; HUTCHINGS, 2018, p. 232). The same sentiments have been expressed to us by first-year archaeology students who want to hear about the “cool civilizations and artifacts from the past” and not the “negative”, “depressing” and “discouraging” reality (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2014, p. 50). So long as these desires are fulfilled, critical discourse will be suppressed and enchantment will bloom.

Enchantment bypasses the realities of disenchantment “by taking refuge in a romantic view of the past” (MÁRMOL *et al.*, 2015, p. 5), and romanticism risks producing a “naïve optimism”, raising questions about “the link between enchantment and mindlessness, between joy and forgetfulness” (BENNETT, 2001, p. 10). Enchantment “temporarily eclipses the anxiety endemic to critical awareness of the world’s often tragic

complexity” (BENNETT, 2001, p. 10) and serves “to convince and to avoid debate, prompting a somewhat forced consent and general agreement” (MÁRMOL *et al.*, 2015, p. 7).

The desire to replace narratives of disenchantment with feel-good ‘Disney’ stories is pervasive and extends well beyond archaeology: whitewashing and externalities are part and parcel of everyday life under industrial-capitalism (FOSTER *et al.*, 2010; KING, 2009; MAGDOFF; FOSTER, 2011). In psychology, such avoidance is considered a coping mechanism characterised by the effort to ignore stressors. Particularly relevant here is cognitive avoidance, which involves avoiding distressing or unpleasant thoughts such as those associated with crisis narratives. The psychosocial mechanisms associated with problem avoidance are complex (e.g., DIXON; QUIRKE, 2018; HOLAHAN *et al.*, 2005).

Archaeologists who are taught that archaeology has “inherent in it sources of enchantment” (PERRY, 2019, p. 355) are likely to experience cognitive dissonance and anomic stress when faced with disenchantment (Figure 1). Such anxiety is relieved via inspirational course corrections (Table 1). Figure 1 is an iterative avoidance model where archaeologists retreat to established ground in the face of holistic institutional critique and concomitant existential disenchantment. While the discipline permits archaeologists to express their disenchantment with certain, narrowly defined aspects of archaeology (a), those who get too close and risk becoming disenchanted with archaeology *in toto* (b) instead make a U-turn (c) and retreat to institutionally permissible discourse. For archaeologists, the U-turn is a matter of survival because entering the chasm means accepting critique and rejecting the ideology of archaeology. Minimally, the chasm represents overwhelming personal disenchantment with archaeology’s principle values of modernity, capitalism, and colonialism. Omnipresent but taboo, the chasm is archaeology’s elephant in the room, Achilles’ heel, and principle source of anxiety.



**Figure 1.** The chasm of disenchantment. Archaeologists retreat to established ground when faced with holistic institutional critique. Their response is a matter of survival because accepting the critique means rejecting the ideology of archaeology. Minimally, the chasm represents overwhelming personal disenchantment with archaeology’s core values.

The simplest and most common course correction (Table 1) involves placing an adjective in front of the word archaeology (GNECCO, 2019) to produce, for example, a sustainable archaeology, a public archaeology, and an Indigenous archaeology. Yet, such rebranding does not actually mean that archaeology is sustainable (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2019a), public (FREDHEIM, 2020), or Indigenous (LA SALLE; HUTCHINGS, 2018). Another tactic is to redefine archaeology as heritage studies (HOLTORF; HÖGBERG 2020). In this way, archaeology has “manouvered itself to be perceived as *good* and of relevance to everyone through its association with ‘heritage’ (WATERTON; SMITH, 2009)”, but it remains principally a self-interested and political endeavour that is “inextricably tied to imperialist and colonial ideology and dispossession” (FREDHEIM, 2020, p. 8). Rebranding archaeology as virtuous allows archaeologists to feel like they are fixing things without compromising their authority, identity or livelihood.

CRITIQUE	CORRECTION
Inability among Europeans to explain ‘prehistory’	→ Antiquarian Archaeology
Inability to explain full range of cultural practices	→ Cultural-Historical Archaeology
Explanations not scientific enough	→ New Archaeology
Explanations too scientific	→ Interpretive Archaeology
Practice irrelevant to/disconnected from public	→ Public Archaeology
Practice not just elitist but capitalist/state-sanctioned	→ Critical Archaeology
Practice racist/colonialist	→ Indigenous Archaeology
Practice unsustainable	→ Sustainable Archaeology
Practice unappealing/unoptimistic	→ Enchanted Archaeology

**Table 1.** Selected course corrections in archaeology

## CONCLUSION: THE LAST ARCHAEOLOGIST?

What makes the future so wicked—so difficult and pernicious—is that it is an “entanglement of matter and meaning”. (TUTTON, 2017, p. 478)

In the best of times, ‘The last archaeologist’ would be memorialised for marking archaeology’s place in the science wars (HOROWITZ *et al.*, 2019), which Laurajane Smith (1999) did by affirming the social construction of archaeological reality and by challenging archaeological claims to authority and ‘scientific’ expertise (SMITH, 1999, p.

25). Yet, these critiques are the same reasons why archaeologists perennially forget archaeology's critics—thus criticism of archaeology.

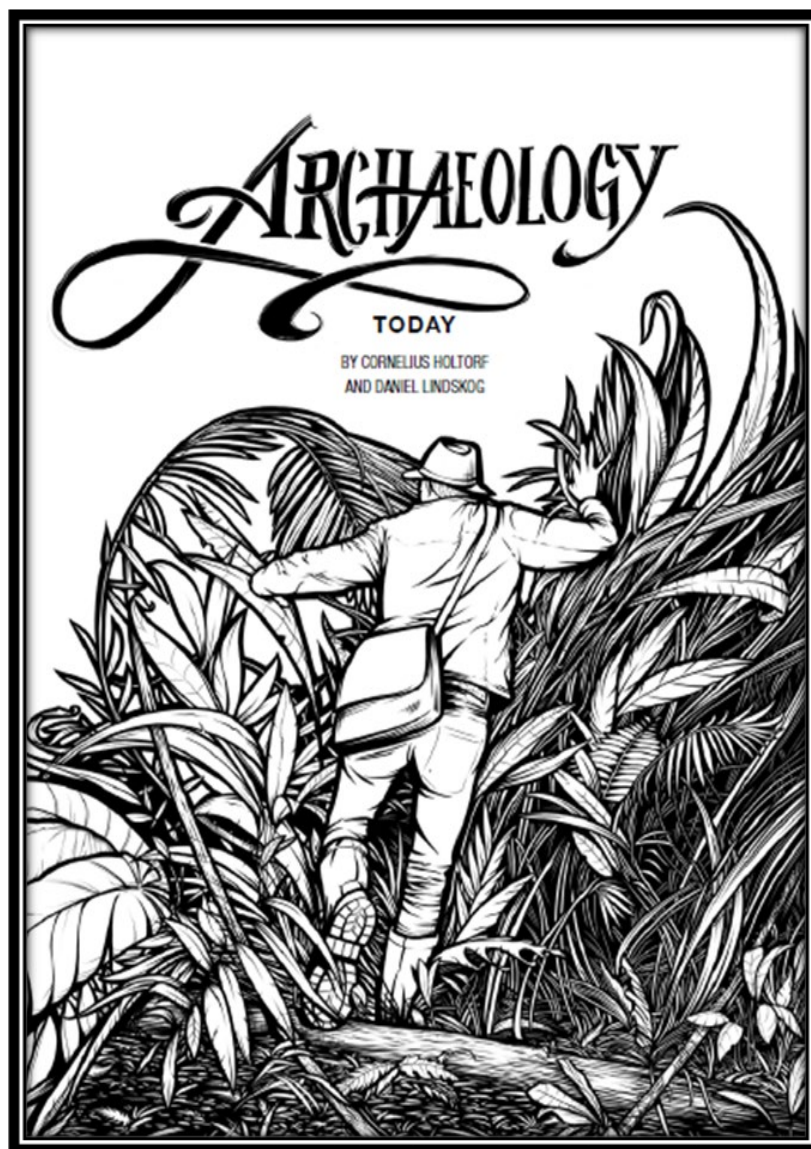
Enchantment is a veiled but visceral response to critical theory and how that makes archaeologists look bad and feel bad. Critiques such as the five archaeological futures presented here undermine the authority of archaeologists and, in so doing, threaten their sense of identity. From a sociological perspective, enchantment 'sacralises the profane': critiques that lead to disenchantment are covered up, erased, avoided and thereby forgotten as tales of enchantment and the healing powers of archaeology become mainstream. Since critique is what motivates change in the first place, the significance of enchantment for archaeology's future cannot be overstated.

By reifying the importance of archaeology, the identity of the archaeologist is secured and its association with all things good affirmed. Like sustainable archaeology, the enchanted futures movement is ultimately self-serving and reflects larger institutional anxieties around an unethical past and an uncertain future (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE 2019a, p. 1653). By weaponising enchantment and love against their disenchanted critics, archaeologists all but ensure themselves a victory in the science wars. Like democracy, magic and love are unassailable (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2015c). After all, how do you challenge love without looking heartless? How do you challenge wonder without looking cruel?

What makes the enchanted futures movement so important and so powerful is that it permits the unification of all positive or 'good' archaeological futures into a single, coherent and decidedly nostalgic narrative (Figure 2). Full of 'archaeo-appeal', this is a story about magic:

That magic is to a large extent about the hero who travels into exotic settings and makes fantastic discoveries, usually underground, of authentic ancient objects that seem to bring him or her a little closer to the ancient people who originally made them and that sometimes, it seems, look back at us [...]. Archaeology combines potent contemporaneous themes such as (scientific) progress, technological wizardry, and ever more 'novel' discoveries, with nostalgia for ancient worlds, Utopias, and fantastic settings in exotic locations. (HOLTORF, 2005, p. 156)

Such magic and enchantment constitute a vital part of archaeology's ideology, an "uncomplicated yet seductive tale of exploration, discovery, adventure and wonder" (HUTCHINGS; LA SALLE, 2014, p. 51).



**Figure 2.** Return to *terra nullius*. Enchantment is an iteration of modernity, capitalism and colonialism such that tomorrow's archaeology will foreground the romantic archaeo-appeal of adventure, exploration, discovery and wonder, as depicted in this new, Indiana Jones-inspired, UNESCO-produced, educational book cover (source: HOLTORF; LINDSKOG, 2020). The image is provocative because its subject matter—archaeology, modernity, capitalism, and colonialism—is evocative.

As virtue signaling, enchantment affirms archaeology's moral goodness (HUTCHINGS, 2021). As propaganda, it ensures that the enchanted survive to tell archaeology's story and that the disenchanted fade away (e.g., SMITH, 1999). The enchantment of archaeology may therefore signify the end of critical archaeology and, with it, the source of motivation for any meaningful change into the future (WATERTON; SMITH 2009).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Laurajane Smith for reviewing a draft of this paper, and we are grateful to Cristóbal Gnecco for his assistance with translation. An earlier version of this paper titled 'A tale of two archaeologies' was presented at the BC Studies Conference, May 5, 2017, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada.



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