BOOK REVIEWS

THE DISCOVERY OF THE PAST, by *Alain Schnapp* (trans. *Ian Kinnes* and *Gillian Varndell*). Pp. 384, figs. 370. Abrams, New York 1997. ISBN 0-8109-3233-4.

A sixth-century B.C. Babylonian scribe comes across an inscription of pre-Sargonic age, copies the text onto a tablet, and adds a commentary on the back; Roman freedmen at Corinth dig open ancient graves and admire their furnishings, only to dispose of them at high prices; in Rome itself, emperors and, later, popes issue prohibitions against the demolition of ancient buildings; at Glastonbury, in 1191, the abbots discover the remains of a man of extraordinary stature and a woman, and they name them "King Arthur and Guinevere"; a Thuringian scholar, Nikolaus Marschalk, around 1500 attributes megaliths in his province to "Herules," tumuli to the "Obetrites": what do such events have in common with the modern discipline of archaeology? How are cabinets of curiosities, the exhumation of saints' relics, or that primordial human trait of collecting anything odd, related to this discipline? Perhaps the relationship is above all one of antithesis, even denial, Schnapp acknowledges in the beginning of this book. As he points out, we, archaeologists, unequivocally distinguish between such practices and ours, and we would rather be mistaken for secret police agents than for collectors or antiquaries. But affinities also exist among the practices in question: in all instances, certain objects are vested with meaning—turned into signifiers; and "when an object is treated as a signifier . . . it may be collected and then subjected to various processes, of which archaeological enquiry is only one" (12).

That logic allows Schnapp to search for antecedents to archaeological enquiry in a large variety of historically documented events, a sample of which I gave above. His is not a history of the *discipline* of archaeology, but a history of the *ancestry* of archaeological reasoning. It is an "origins narrative," beginning with the Neo-Babylonians and the Classical Greeks, and ending with the discoveries of Boucher de Perthes and his vindication, in the middle of the 19th century. (*Aux origines de l'archéologie* was the subtitle of the 1993 French edition.) In the course of this narrative, the author's voice is nowhere alone. It is accompanied throughout by voices and visions from the past, the former as quoted passages, the latter as illustrations. Hardly a page is without a superb illustration, hardly a section without a fascinating quotation. Longer excerpts are reserved for an annotated anthology (45 pages) that concludes the book.

Along with the Graeco-Roman world and a delightful excursion into the Chinese antiquarian tradition, chapter 1 treats European medieval sources, from references to *tumuli paganorum* in Polish chronicles to the identification of Mont Auxois with Caesar's Alesia and the humanist interests of Piccolomini and Mehmet the Conqueror. In Schnapp's view, "from the far-off philosophers of Ionia to the scholars of the Renaissance, from Herodotus to Cyriac of Ancona, a subtle thread runs, linking the antiquarians among them" (111). With chapter 2 we are in the 16th and earlier 17th centuries, when across central and northern Europe "men began to scrutinise the soil and the countryside . . . seeking to understand" (139), when the monuments of Rome were surveyed, old runic inscriptions were deciphered, and *Wunderkammer* proliferated. Differences in antiquarian orientation from one European province to the next are given attention, as are efforts at classification and opinions about the origin of flint implements (or "ceraunites") and funerary urns (or spontaneous earth creations, growing in springtime). Illustrations of buildings, artifacts, and landscapes, as well as panoramas of collections (*Musea*, real and imaginary), became important vehicles of antiquarian knowledge at that time. Many such illustrations are reproduced and commented upon.

"From Antiquary to Archaeologist" (ch. 3) takes us to the later 17th and early 18th centuries, to a scholarly world that became increasingly skeptical about the possibility of deriving historical knowledge from the ancient authors. In that climate of historical Pyrrhonism, objects were privileged over texts as more trustworthy signs of the past. Attention turned to coins and inscriptions, but also to urn burials and weapons, megaliths, and even pictorial representations—things that had "escaped the teeth of Time" (in John Aubrey's phrase) and were still accessible to the sight. Antiquaries in some quarters now were "men who set out explicitly to construct a science of antiquities as a discipline in itself" (179). Underpinning that claim, illustrations include excavated artifacts in typological arrangements, and some of the earliest drawings of stratigraphic sections.

Principles of continuity and progress inform the entire work, yet Schnapp's is hardly a narrative of unfailing progress of knowledge. The remaining two chapters and a brief conclusion bear this out, as they take the narrative to the 19th century. The emphasis here is as much on accomplishments as on setbacks. For example, collecting for its own sake and looting of antiquities were carried out ever more systematically in the eastern Mediterranean, just when classical archaeology was endeavoring to establish itself as a branch of scientific knowledge. Appeals for undertaking nationwide programs of preservation of ancient monuments in post-revolutionary France fell for a long time on deaf ears. Adherence to the biblical chronology continued to obstruct the development of a "natural history of man," despite a growing record of stratigraphic observations and ever greater rigor in artifact typologies. Schnapp moves through a mosaic of concepts and arguments over stratigraphy, technology, and typology, the intellectual materials from which archaeology's first time machine, the Three Age system, was constructed.

Was Montfaucon really the inheritor of Varro, Worsae the inheritor of Diodorus? Has continuity in reasoning really been more important than rupture, thoughts more important than a wide spectrum of practices, in the formation of disciplinary archaeology? I doubt it. The comparisons Schnapp draws between ideas centuries apart are

sometimes mechanical. Was the Three Age system inevitable? To what resources (experiences, metaphors) did the antiquaries resort in imagining the past, and how did those resources change from one century to the next? Such questions do not come into sharp focus. But it may be ungrateful to complain about so rich a book, a *Wunderkammer* of stories, images, little known facts, and keen observations.

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THE CULTURAL LIFE OF IMAGES: VISUAL REPRESENTATION IN ARCHAEOLOGY, edited by *Brian Leigh Molyneaux*. Pp. xvii + 274, figs. 99, table 1. Routledge, London and New York 1997. $69.95. ISBN 0-415-10675-3.

Despite the portentous title suggesting a synthetic interdisciplinary exploration, the contents of this volume are more adequately indicated by the subtitle. Twelve authors deal with aspects of the use of images of the past in the disciplinary practices, and to some extent the history, of archaeology. Most of them concentrate on this topic as such, although three chapters deal with the interpretation of images actually produced in the past—by pharaonic Egyptian, classical Greek, and Plains Indian artists—as an indirect way of introducing the theme of the archaeological use, and abuse, of images. Although several essays are quite slight, others take up complex and weighty theoretical problems, with varying success.

It is not always clear to whom this volume is addressed or who will find it useful. The chief target of the anthology's general polemic would appear to be a working archaeologist who unhesitatingly accepts pictures of the past—for example, excavation photographs, reconstructions of artifacts or sites, or museum displays—as unmediated, neutral representations of the depicted ancient reality; he or she allegedly treats the depiction as wholly "transparent" to its intended object. Although a few references are made to archaeologists who might have done this, especially several generations ago, it is unclear how many today would really do so. And if they do, I doubt that they would be convinced by the arguments in this volume, which typically assume relativist and culturalist premises and rarely—at a theoretical level—take up the reasons for one's rationally assuming the nonarbitrary connectedness of an image with its object, at least sometimes or in some relevant respects. Among working archaeologists, most practitioners probably know themselves fairly self-consciously to be facing the situations well described by Simon James (ch. 2) in his straightforward reflections on reconstruction drawings or by Michael Shanks (ch. 5) in his more labored consideration of archaeology and photography: they know an image of the past—like any depiction—to be a mixture of resemblances and representations, responding as much to contemporary disciplinary, ideological, and even financial pressures as to archaeological knowledge of the past. Still, it would be salutary for any working archaeologist to read through the volume as a whole, for it does serve to suggest the range of problems that one must keep in mind in "representing the past" visually and gives some feel for the techniques and discussions that are likely to occupy the near-term future of archaeology, especially as computer-generated image-making begins to influence excavation and publication.

Most other readers—museum curators, anthropologists, art historians, philosophers—have long assumed the culturally constructed and "noninnocent" nature of depiction. Many of them will probably find the "theoretical" arguments in these essays to be largely familiar; they will already have reviewed the material presented in Alan Costall's brief survey (ch. 3) of theories of depiction, though they might or might not share his preference for a modified resemblance theory of pictorial communication—and probably will be most interested in the more particular and substantive discussions of specific archaeological illustrations or images of the past, as in Stephanie Moser and Clive Gamble's fine essay (ch. 9) on different styles, iconographies, or genres of representing human antiquity (offering an intriguing juxtaposition of the "Romantic," "archaeological," and "comic" traditions) or Timothy Champion's useful charting (ch. 10) of the representation of ancient Gauls in the 19th century. These studies fit well into the growing interdisciplinary consideration of visual representations of the past, which has included major international exhibitions and full-length monographs on the representation of the past, or of chronological and geographic "otherness" generally, in the contexts of modern rationalism, nationalism, imperialism, and racism.

In his contribution, Brian Molyneaux (ch. 6) examines expressive variation in 18th-Dynasty tomb painting in Egypt; his overall point seems to be that an archaeological perspective on image making would examine their "situational" dimension—the way in which highly traditional styles and motifs were specifically "shaped" in each context of use, including what might be the extremely local needs and interests of the artist or patron himself or herself. Although this is indeed an archaeological question—whether it is addressed by archaeologists or by art historians and others—Molyneaux's example does not wholly convince; variation in the height of depicted figures in Theban tomb painting might reflect changes in the social and ideological relations between the tomb's patron and the reigning pharaoh, as Molyneaux suggests, but the material causality could equally be the other way around (for images, as other essays take pains to point out, are not merely passive reflections of social conditions) and other scenarios equally account for the reported measurements. In general, Molyneaux's faith that metric study of images will reveal relative visibilities of depiction and hence the patterns of significance or meaning in narrative and metaphorical visual communications seems overly optimistic.

Two chapters (7 and 8) by Brian A. Sparkes and Richard A. Fox, Jr., are nicely paired. Sparkes considers Greek images of non-Greeks; the topic is extremely familiar to