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# Sustainable Heritage? Public Archaeological Interpretation and the Marketed Past

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CHAPTER 10

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## INTRODUCTION

Public archaeological interpretation has come a long way from earlier eras of unnuanced positivism and full confidence in the objectivity of specialized scholarship. The impact of contemporary social and political ideologies on the choices, emphases, and narratives of archaeological practice is now widely acknowledged (Gathercole and Lowenthal 1989; Kohl and Fawcett 1996; Meskell 1998). Important intellectual attempts have been made to counteract the influence of ethnic nationalism, racism, and colonialism on the practice of public archaeological interpretation, particularly in the realms of site presentation and community education programs (Henson *et al* 2004; Little 2002). For the most part, however, this academic critique has concerned intangible aspects of archaeological interpretation: images, narratives, and commemorative ideologies. Yet over the last 25 years – even as intellectual debates have raged within academia over issues of ideology, narrative construction, and multivocality – the *physical* structures of public presentation at many major archaeological sites have been dramatically transformed.

Governmental authorities and international development agencies have made substantial investments to convert important archaeological and historical sites into 'sustainable' engines of local and regional economic development, in hopes of creating new 'heritage attractions' that will offer local employment opportunities and stimulate interregional tourism and trade (as analyzed by Baram and Rowan 2004 and prescribed by Hutter and Rizzo 1997). Public funding programs like those of the European Commission's Interreg programs and Culture 2000 (DG Education and Culture 2002) and the World Bank's 'Framework for Action in Cultural Heritage and Development in the

Middle East and North Africa' (Cernea 2001) have set standards – and offer substantial economic incentives – for governmental investment in the form, structure and even presentation design of major archaeological sites.

The World Bank has clearly expressed the underlying rationale of the concept of 'sustainable heritage' and outlined its basic political economy:

> By definition, the patrimony represents a vast collection of cultural assets, but these assets also have a huge economic value. Markets only imperfectly recognize this economic value because of insufficient information and inadequate pricing mechanisms. Historically, the economic value of the patrimony's endowments has been given much less attention than its cultural significance. Largely because of this limited recognition, policy makers and planners in developing countries have been little concerned, and little able, to activate and harvest the economic value of their country's patrimony. Bank policy has come to unambiguously recognize this economic value. It holds that the patrimony can become an auxiliary engine for generating economic growth and development'. (Cernea 2001:33)

This vision has, in fact, been put into action. A new trans-national industry has grown up to support the activation and the so-called 'harvesting' of the economic value of heritage resources (Hall and McArthur 1998). Since the bulk of public investment goes into infrastructural improvements at archaeological and heritage sites, and since these require complex project management skills and elaborate presentation technologies not generally within the capacities of local governments or heritage authorities, a network of heritage consultants, multimedia technologists, and exhibit designers compete for lucrative contracts at historical and archaeological sites all over the world.

The result of their efforts at site presentation is the emergence of a distinctive physical form, in which the visitors' centre and multimedia applications are often central elements. Borrowing design concepts from theme parks and interactive museums, site planners now utilize traditional didactic, museum-type text displays only when limited budgets restrict them to the cheapest, no-frills displays. More creative and energetic interpretive solutions, such as interactive applications, computer 3D reconstructions, and Virtual Reality experiences are now almost always utilized in the refurbishing of archaeological sites when the project budget permits (Addison 2003; Seaton and Bennett 1996). Great efforts have been taken to create stunning historical environments with a wide enough range of vivid images and impressions to satisfy almost every visitor's taste (Leask and Yeoman 1999). The practical challenge of the most ambitious heritage development projects thus goes far beyond conveying information about the archaeology



and history of the site. In most cases, the operational motivation is not primarily didactic or ideological, but is explicitly economic: By attracting significantly increased numbers of tourists to a particular site, it is assumed that the local economy will benefit by their presence (and their purchasing power). What this usually amounts to – at least in its most successful manifestations – is the creation of venues for carefully processed leisure-time entertainment, structured and marketed with the same modes of tour booking, entrance fees, restaurants, gift shops, and overnight accommodations as other packaged visits of the modern mass tourist industry.

Thus any serious intellectual discussion of the contemporary socio-economic context of public archaeological interpretation must take this changing market reality into account. While earlier examinations of the social context of archaeological practice have concentrated on the message, the *physical* form and emerging medium of archaeological sites as 'heritage attractions' and their function as sources of even indirect revenue generation is no less important. This paper will attempt to address four basic questions, central to understanding the significance of this phenomenon. What is the place of these new cultural heritage attractions on the contemporary material landscape? What vision of the past do they create in the public (and individual) consciousness? Do they actually produce the economic benefits that their sponsors and funders anticipate? And, finally, what role in this economically driven process do, or should, archaeologists play?

## FROM CULTURAL TOURISM TO ENTERTAINMENT

There is, of course, nothing new about archaeological sites being marketed as tourist attractions. From antiquity onwards, there have always been gawkers, gapers, and holiday-makers at the iconic monuments of Europe – Stonehenge, Carnac, the Roman Coliseum, and the Parthenon, just to mention a few. Impressive (and often mysterious) sites of ancient human achievement evoked visitors' feelings of wonder and romantic daydreams of escape from familiar routines and limitations of everyday life. The customs of medieval pilgrimage to the great religious and healing shrines established the basic behaviours that would continue for centuries and indeed to the present: regularized routes, the construction of special visitor accommodations, package tours of important buildings and relics, and a cluster of local economic activities from catering, innkeeping, and guiding, to the sale of souvenirs (Sumption 1975).

By the time of the Grand Tour in the 18th century (Hibbert 1987), the behaviours of traditional religious pilgrimage were merged with a more secular antiquarian fascination. Enlightenment visions of human progress and a romantic longing for ancient grandeur gradually

replaced ecclesiastical rituals as the accepted route to communion with the past. Yet the basic behaviours of pilgrimage endured. By the 19th century, mass tourism to archaeological sites throughout Europe and the Middle East, ever more closely linked to local and trans-national transportation systems and marketing networks, created a standardized repertoire of 'must see' antiquarian icons, attractions, and performances, as described in vivid, ethnographic detail in Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* (1869). Yet in this new movement of mass tourism, the profit imperatives of the modern industrial order gradually became central (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). In the 20th century, as the competition for visitors mounted, public presentations were expanded to include historic re-enactments, reconstructed buildings, national celebrations, and an increasingly wide range of mass-produced souvenirs and memorabilia. In the late 20th century, the theme-park techniques of promotion and niche marketing were added (Bennett 1997). Yet it is a mistake to see the new Information Age 'edutainment' tools of interactivity and Virtual Reality as merely technological enhancements of time-honoured archaeological pilgrimage-and-tourism routines.

In the words of David Lowenthal (2002), the past has become theme park, as different from traditional touristic presentations of ancient monuments as Disneyworld is from a county fair. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the creation of national networks of monuments and protected archaeological sites served as an explicit tool of state-building. They were tangible, landscape-bound visions of common heritage that distinguished the historical identity of a particular country from that of neighbouring and competitor states. Tourism was a method of public education through which distinctive national biographies were conveyed. The new tools of multimedia and elaborate site presentation are still often used to reinforce existing nationalistic messages. There is also an increasing trend toward trans-national messages and 'globalised' interpretation that is hardly less ideological, serving the interests of regional unification and globalization, as in the cases of European Union cultural programs and the UNESCO World Heritage List. Yet the purely economic motivation has become a significant factor in itself: All across the world, in recent decades, archaeological and other heritage sites by the hundreds if not thousands have been valorized, glamorized, and relentlessly merchandized by regions, municipalities, local communities, and even private management companies seeking to attract visitors and the prospects for economic development that they bring (Herbert 1989). In this effort, the raising of visitor revenues – rather than any particular interpretation – is often the chief motivation and the primary index of success.

The phenomenon is especially striking in the Middle East and North Africa, where, despite the continuing conflicts between ethnic



groups and nation-states, archaeological sites are increasingly uniform in infrastructure and appearance, funded and developed for their generalized touristic appeal (Silberman 1998). In nations such as Syria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, and Morocco – each still with their distinctive historical-ideological visions – major (usually Roman-period) sites featuring monumental structures, soaring columns, and multimedia experiences have become strikingly uniform, in their use of ancient remains as the stage setting for an enjoyable visitor experience.

The elaborate sites in North Africa and the Middle East, as elsewhere, do not lack a narrative often still bearing messages of national identity, but it is one that is shifting steadily from didactic or rhetorical to experiential – meant to be read primarily with the visitors' emotions and feet. It is carefully and consciously inscribed in the walking paths and in the circulation routes through ruins and exhibit spaces through the painstaking planning of professional (and almost always non-local) site designers, whose expertise has become a prerequisite for every major heritage development project. The visit is conceived as a journey into the past with a beginning, middle and end. Through the generic shaping of the site's space and precise localization of functions, it consists of passage through a series of Goffman-esque 'frames' (Goffman 1974): from the parking lot, through the ticket booth, into the main reception and information area, along the marked or suggested paths of public interpretation with stops at highlighted informational panels and multimedia installations, then to the shop and cafeteria, and then out to the parking lot again. This patterned visitor behaviour has little dependence on the content; sites with such different archaeological and historical significance as Mesa Verde, Knossos, Pompeii, Versailles, and Auschwitz share more than they differ in the layout of visitor facilities and patterned behaviour of visitation that such a layout creates.

That experiential uniformity, I would argue, has far-reaching, yet underappreciated significance. Dean MacCannell (1976) perceptively characterized the function of theme parks, studio tours and heritage visits as a search for 'authentic experience' by work-weary participants in industrialized economies. Since the development of modern heritage sites is now increasingly based on economic considerations, its planners must now contend with the fierce market competition of attracting visitors to heritage sites from other leisure time alternatives like the mountains, the movies or the beach. As a result, the heritage experience has often been tailored to improve the bottom line. The work of Handler and Gable at Colonial Williamsburg (1997) has shown how historical interpretation can be subtly edited to eliminate the kinds of troubling or unpleasant realities that are likely to drive

holiday makers away. Finances and balance sheets – far more than official commemorative ideologies – have become the real tyrants in the shaping of 'sustainable' heritage and its interpretive messages. Although this new infrastructural form does not determine the specific content of site presentation, it demands that it be coherent, easy to follow and capable of holding the attention of the widest possible audience. In a word, it enables archaeological sites and other heritage attractions to become part of the 'Experience Economy'.

## PUBLIC INTERPRETATION AND THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

You do not have to read Neil Postman's scathing jeremiad *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) to know that we live in an age of flashing, shallow and ideologically loaded TV images. Like pieces in a mosaic, they embody a breathless public narrative of conquest and consumption that often controls and reinforces – rather than passively reflects – the consumer economy. In recent years, a particular emphasis has been placed on utilizing video and multimedia to create a wide range of visitor experiences that offer a sense of involvement and interactivity. Beyond computer-based games and searchable databases, there are now elaborate – and sometimes immersive – virtual reconstructions of ancient landscapes and structures (Barcelo *et al* 2000) and the opportunity for visitors to interact with simulated ancient characters from the history of the specific site (eg, Churcher nd). Of course, this interactive element of public interpretation also has a history that stretches far back before the Digital Age. The costumed guides at World's Fairs and early 20th-century open-air museums first challenged the omniscient voice of guide books and text panels. The first-person re-enactors at Colonial Williamsburg and Plimoth Plantation provided visitors with more personalized experiences than the standard guided tour (Silberman 2005). But today, the direct, sensory – rather than merely intellectual or educational – involvement of visitors in public heritage interpretation has become part of an essential marketing strategy.

Indeed it could be argued that this is not an isolated phenomenon but is closely related to changes in the wider economy. Among economic theorists and business strategists, the belief is quickly spreading that experience itself has become a valuable commodity. With the production of manufactured goods now outsourced to regions where the costs of labour are the lowest, and the profitability of secondary services (such as telecommunications, transport, finance, and data processing) likewise suffering from intensive competition, the creation and marketing of consumer experience is an area with the greatest perceived potential for growth (Pine and Gilmore 1999). To achieve this, service providers



must distinguish themselves from their competitors by providing a memorable and personalized experience; customers must be courted with the feeling that they are receiving something unique and uniquely designed for them. In this new vision of the 21st-century post-service economy, otherwise routine business transactions are carefully scripted, and events and personalized interactions are staged so as to leave the consumer entertained. Thus, in the ever-expanding range of restaurant chains, shopping malls, and clothing outlets – as well as resorts and tourist attractions – the keys to success, according to the gurus of the Experience Economy (Pine and Gilmore 1998), lay in:

- designing a themed experience
- planting positive cues to elicit pleasant emotions
- eliminating negative cues
- evoking romantic nostalgia through memorabilia
- engaging all five senses in the experience

These are of course the essential components of the theme park experience, but it is now used in the planning of upscale suburbs, gentrified city centres, and restored historic districts – as well as expensively designed and presented archaeological sites. In that sense the past is in danger of becoming just another theme in an expanding experience market. While it could be argued that clothing at Banana Republic would still be as attractive without the 'jungle adventurer' theme – or that food at the Hard Rock Café would be just as tasty without the framed gold records and autographed electric guitars – the point of the Experience Economy is precisely to blur the distinction between product, service, and entertainment (Gottdiener 1997). And that is exactly what the emerging forms of interactive heritage presentation are designed to do so well.

Their goal is to make a visit to a heritage site an unforgettable experience, but what is it exactly that remains so vivid in the visitor's mind? There are clear indications that it is only the memory of the physical experience itself. While sensory effects have been utilized in some sites where national biography remains the main theme (eg, the Wasa Museum in Sweden; the Museum of the History of Catalonia in Barcelona; and the Second Temple Period Archaeological Park and Davidson Exhibition and Virtual Reconstruction Center in Jerusalem) the visitors' reactions are evoked in a carefully planned immersive environment, where impressive and thrilling images are perceived primarily through the senses. It may be legitimate to question whether this mode of apprehension fundamentally alters or transforms the impact of the information conveyed. Embodiment and the social construction of physical sensations has in recent years become a major research interest in a wide range of disciples including archaeology and anthropology

(eg, Hamilakis *et al* 2002). Thus, beyond the compilation of attendance numbers and recording of income from admissions and subsidiary sales, the serious analysis of 'embodied' visitor reactions at elaborate, interactive heritage attractions may become an important element of the study of the new physical context of multimedia-aided heritage sites.

A recent study of the use of Virtual Reality to convey archaeological and ethnographic information (Ladeira and Blake 2004) suggests that there may indeed be a clear trade-off between intellectual comprehension and sensory enjoyment. In this study, the test group that was asked to read the information in text form showed significantly higher comprehension of the facts and information presented, while the group that experienced the Virtual Reality version of the same material – presented in a VR environment, with a computer-generated character, of a type increasingly common in digital heritage presentations (eg, Wilkinson *et al* 2004) – showed significantly higher levels of enjoyment and interest, but significantly lower comprehension of the specific information conveyed.

Further study is certainly needed to determine how profoundly the medium of emerging heritage attractions may endanger their value as sources of historical information as well (as also indicated in earlier museum and site studies, eg, Borun 1977; Screven 1975; Shettel 1968; Uzzell 1989). Yet for better or worse the requirements of modern heritage marketing have carefully designed a medium that conscientiously avoids the kinds of subjects or presentation methods that are likely to keep the holiday makers away. No message is effective unless it is, above all, sensorially arresting and emotionally entertaining. But the value of the past is precisely to convey information about other times and cultures, to offer difficult themes for public discussion and serious reflection, a task hardly possible when the goal is to capture a market share of recreational activities. Are we in danger of transforming the past into a theme park and the site into an outlet for McArchaeology? Another important question still remains to be answered: Does this kind of elaborate heritage presentation – even if it is more Hollywood than Heritage – actually provide the economic benefits it claims?

## IF YOU BUILD IT, WILL THEY COME?

In an era when public culture budgets are shrinking and cultural institutions of all kinds are being forced to become financially self-sustaining, the viability of preservation and presentation projects are, in the long run, often tied to their success in stimulating economic development – by paid admissions, subsidiary sales of postcards and other museum-shop items, local employment opportunities, and a steady flow of tourist revenue for hotels, shops, and restaurants in the



immediate vicinity. It is conceivable, of course, that marketed heritage can succeed by the benchmark of profitability alone. Yet to what extent do these economic benefits trickle down to the inhabitants and associated communities of the heritage sites concerned? The evidence is admittedly anecdotal, yet the pattern – as seen from a contemporary European perspective (Palumbo 2006) and from the particular experience of the Ename Center for Public Archeology in Belgium (Silberman and Callebaut 2006) – is as uniform as it is disheartening for the future of heritage in 21st-century industrial society.

Our experience in European heritage projects has shown that, in the planning stages, if the right balance is not achieved between the contribution of outside professionals and the input from the local community, the preservation project, even if successful, can appear to local residents as an outside imposition – like a shopping mall or private theme park – with solely or mainly economic significance for the political leadership and local business community. If it succeeds, the commercial activity will benefit those investors and public funders with a direct economic stake. Meaningful economic integration into the project by the general public often takes the form of menial service jobs on the site and in the subsidiary commercial establishments. Even the most successful projects can sow resentment among those not immediately benefiting from the economic activity on any meaningful level, and who often suffer directly from the successful site's side effects – a lack of parking, traffic congestion, and disruption of normal routines. It can thus be dismissed as 'someone else's' monument, an alien intrusion not meaningfully integrated into the memories, stories, and attitudes that constitute the entire community's shared identity.

Economic success, with all its social pitfalls, is certainly *not* guaranteed, even though international and regional funding programs continually stress the economic potential of heritage development in marginal areas. Nonetheless, in many cases, particularly in regions where traditional agriculture has collapsed or where industry has fled (leaving historic town centres to deteriorate), the lure of harvested, processed heritage is hard to resist.

Some sites, no matter how meticulously researched and elaborately developed, will never attract large numbers of visitors, for the routes of tourism are exceptionally inflexible, based less on content than on the convenience of nearby highways and airports, the pressures of itinerary planning, and the most comfortable facilities (Hamza 2004). The achievable attendance figures for a potential heritage attraction are limited by its location within the larger marketing networks of the tourist industry. Although the notable recent experience of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain is touted as the model for future development of a formerly neglected area into a focus of thriving cultural tourism, it cannot

be uncritically applied to every case where a local government decides or is persuaded to invest public funds in super-sizing a modest, existing monument or archaeological site with the investment in multimedia presentation, obtained either through direct funding or international loans. Despite the attractive offers and funding, the likelihood of energizing local economies through heritage presentation must take into account the harsh calculus of investment costs vs. logically expected return (Briedenhann and Wickens 2004; Palumbo 2006). Although the academic tourism literature is filled with conceptual studies of new formulations like 'co-opetition' among regional attractions (eg, Buhalis 2003), the hard fact of the matter is that, in the absence of detailed market studies and almost always in the absence of enough funds to make such a study before initiating expensive heritage presentation projects, many (most?) local communities' heritage presentation and valorization projects are embarking on what might well be a very dangerous course.

For, in practice, the inspiration for major heritage projects is almost always economic. Whether it is the complex and expensive application process for listing on the UNESCO World Heritage list or the construction of a new visitor centre, local governmental authorities justify their funding applications and budgeting on the idea of local economic development. And they are often encouraged to do so by heritage professionals (with a professional interest in participating in projects) and by scholars who believe that a flow of financing to a particular monument or archaeological site will enhance the possibility of obtaining additional research funds.

If economic targets are not met, the local community eventually bears the brunt of miscalculation. While an elaborately preserved and interpreted site may look perfect to the invited dignitaries and guests on its festive opening day, the invisible hand of the cultural tourism market determines what the future will bring. Although the academic tourism literature is filled with examples and principles for the rationale management of visitor flow at well-known sites and popular attractions, the problem of *inadequate* visitorship (at least to defray the costs of elaborate infrastructures and presentations) remains the single greatest unmet challenge in the realm of 'sustainable' heritage. The novelty of a new site and an energetic public relations campaign may initially create a dramatic rise in visitation, and perhaps spur intensified local investment in subsidiary services such as shops, restaurants, and hotels in the vicinity, yet its natural place in the hierarchy of international and regional tourist routes will have a decisive effect. After the curiosity of local and regional visitors has been exhausted, attendance numbers will rapidly return to their equilibrium level, calling into question the economic strategy that led local officials to invest time, energy and public funds in the heritage project.



To make matters worse, this often occurs precisely at a time when maintenance and security costs will be rising, especially in the case of sites where interpretive technology such as interactive installations and multimedia presentations is used. For a local community to take a leap of faith into the murky waters of the contemporary heritage industry is a serious political risk. Miscalculations about economic sustainability or even viability can only be addressed by extreme measures: either franchising site management to private firms whose concern is still more ruthlessly financial or – even more ultimately destructive to the cause of heritage preservation – namely the investment of yet more public funding in a renovation or extension of the multimedia attractions and experiences to be marketed to visitors at the site.

And so the cycle can grow more and more vicious as the site's position within the hierarchy of tourist destinations clings stubbornly at its point of natural equilibrium. This is not to say that visitation cannot ever be changed for the better, but doing so requires a continuing effort of enormous proportions that may simply not be worth the financial risk for a local community when calculated in terms of investment-and-return (Rousso 2002). As a result there is generally a breaking point, a moment of crisis, when the project that was once was sold as 'sustainable', that is, a self-supporting engine of local economic development, turns out to be anything but that. By the time that unrealistic expectations of increased visitation have failed to materialize and the costs of adequate staffing, maintenance, and regular content updating have soared, its physical state and its once-enthusiastic acceptance by its promoters and the general public has generally changed for the worse. Extensive, detailed statistical studies still need to be carried out to document this process in quantitative terms, yet it is already clear that failed heritage projects are destructive to the contemporary historical landscape. In small and marginal communities under economic stress, heritage – and the political will to preserve and present it – is destroyed in the process. Poorly maintained, or broken and graffiti-covered multimedia kiosks, informational panels, and derelict visitor facilities are the lingering monuments to utterly unsustainable heritage development.

That does not mean that more modest heritage sites do not deserve interpretation, for they each represent a material resource, a constant reminder of the past's ever-presence in the contemporary world. Current heritage practices and new forms of cultural communication programs must be monitored closely and reoriented toward goals in which success lies not only in professional competence, technology and rational planning, but in the creation of lively local institutions – sustainable in the long run not because of how much they make, how they look, or what experiences they provide – but for how effectively

they function as centres for common reflection, self-assertion, productive questioning and historical awareness within every community.

## A NEW ROLE FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS?

As archaeologists, we are – or should be – constantly on the watch in our theories and in our research designs for the pervasive influence of contemporary ideologies on our understanding of the past. The decision of the 1st World Archaeological Congress against the participation of apartheid-era South African scholars is just one of the first milestones in a modern history of increasing political activism (Ucko 1987). Struggles over repatriation, indigenous rights, alternative histories, archaeologies of resistance, multivocality, public outreach and community activism are some of the others. The discipline has turned from scholarly preoccupation to serious attempts to trace and understand the various ideological, political and economic pressures that have shaped the structure of the discipline and have moulded its results. The recognition that the ideology of archaeology indeed has a politics, a history, and a social impact has been the subject of endless conferences, monographs, and international academic debates.

Yet our self-congratulation of freeing ourselves intellectually from the pernicious and monolithic antiquarian images of 19th and 20th century racism and nationalism should not blind us to our wider society's tangible structures of representation that have a power all their own. The role of archaeologist as an intellectual within wider society – beyond the confines of specialist study and academic isolation – entails serious obligations and responsibilities (Hamilakis 1999). The flows of international, national, and – increasingly – corporate funding determine not only the physical infrastructure of cultural tourism and historical monuments – but also the research programs, research agendas, and departmental development strategies that are closely connected to them. While professional archaeological organizations issue statements condemning the destruction of antiquities in occupied territory, and disown racist interpretations and patriotic mobilization of archaeological findings that claim to prove the 'priority' of rival claimants to a temple site or olive grove, something else no less powerful and no less potentially pernicious is going on with their willing complicity.

Cultural tourism has constructed a network, a collection, of immovable relics that have become the raw materials for a new kind of profit-driven globalized pilgrimage. All too often, archaeologists, in search of local government good will and research funding, are key players in at least the start of the process. But they rarely ever have the power to control or, seemingly, even recognize their ethical responsibility to sound a



note of caution against the seductive representations of the past others create from their work.

If archaeologists – as individuals and as a discipline – are going to have a positive social influence beyond the strictly professional collection of data, they must begin thinking not only of ideology and literary genre, but also of the contemporary economic structures that exploit and endanger the material remains of the past. The reality of archaeology's embeddedness in the trans-national global economy can be neither ignored nor denied. Remaining aloof is hardly an option, since archaeological sites and the permissions to conduct excavations and research about them are dependent on official support. And the building of theme parks continues, with entrepreneurs and presentation firms actively scouting out regional governments, communities, and nations for new heritage attractions. As scholars dedicated to studying and analyzing the material remains of human culture, we must more carefully examine our position within the market forces and capital investment flows that are transforming the historical landscape. We must also engage more critically and directly with the contemporary processes and forms of public archaeological interpretation, lest our reticence or silence allow the myth of 'sustainable' heritage – at least in the economic terms and with the interpretive techniques it is now widely promoted – continue to thrive.

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