

BOOK REVIEWS

Brad Duncan and Martin Gibbs *Please God Send Me a Wreck: Responses to Shipwreck in a 19th Century Australian Community*. Springer, New York, 2015; 243 pages; hardcover; ISBN 1869-6783. US\$129.00.

For a number of years now, the *maritime cultural landscape* approach originally proposed by Christer Westerdahl in 1992 has been influencing the fields of maritime archaeology and land-based archaeologies alike. For those who have an interest in maritime archaeology, yet prefer not to venture into the water, this approach is a beacon of light. Not only can we now explore maritime culture without the restriction of being confined to a wreck, we can also incorporate the cognitive aspects of maritime culture connected to the land through the land-based fields of archaeology, essentially merging the terrestrial and submarine spheres into one coherent whole.

As appealing as this approach is, the maritime cultural landscape as a working methodology appears to still be realised. This is made clear within the first pages of *Please God Send Me a Wreck*, with the authors stating clearly how, although the maritime cultural landscape has been embraced with enthusiasm, the use of this approach has been misguided in some instances through the “simplistic re-branding of what are still primarily descriptive archaeological site surveys of wrecks and infrastructure without any genuine attempt to understand the nature of the cultural systems which created, used and perceived these sites and places” (p. 3). This volume therefore seeks, in part, to influence the direction of cultural landscape studies within the field of maritime archaeology.

With the coastal Borough of Queenscliffe, Victoria as the research area, Duncan and Gibbs explore the relationships between this community and the shipping mishaps that occurred within the coastal and inland water surrounds over the past 160 years. The chapters within the volume are structured in a way that best highlights the maritime cultural landscape approach as a working model. This is exemplified with chapter two providing a brief history of the maritime cultural landscape approach, followed by descriptions of a number of theoretical and methodological avenues and how they may be incorporated within the framework of this research. These approaches (and there are many) are broken down in a digestible manner, covering such topics as ‘Landscapes Are Physical and Cognitive,’ ‘Land Versus Sea Divide,’ ‘Landscapes of Movement (Sailing Routes),’ and ‘Ritual, Superstition and Symbolism Play a Vital Role in the Determination of Landscapes’.

From this point, the book is set out in a way that first focuses on the cultural aspects of the community (chapters three to five), followed by the physical and archaeological elements in chapters six and seven. This allows for the cultural landscape of Queenscliffe to be understood both cognitively through the oral and written records of the community, then through the physical evidence of the environment, the extant structures and archaeological remains alike.

Chapter Three moves directly into the study area, describing the environmental setting and historical development of Queenscliffe in relation to shipping mishaps. It covers how the community prepared for shipping mishaps through the emergence of a piloting service, the emplacement of lighthouses and beacons, the development of hydrographic surveying, the creation of channels for larger vessels as shipping increased through Port Phillip Bay, and long-term mitigation responses such as lifeboat rescue and customs services. Chapter Four examines the crisis phase response, discussing the historical significance of the wreck bell and lifeboat services. In exploring the contradictory themes of the

community’s role of saviour versus salver, this history covers the importance of the lifeboat service as an economic necessity to the fishermen and their families as well as the dangers placed upon them. The authors also discuss the looting and caching of wrecked goods and the attraction of tourists to wrecking events, providing a multi-faceted view of the responses to shipping mishaps within the community. Chapter Five moves onto the mid to long-term responses of shipping mishaps through the official and opportunistic salvage of shipwrecks and associated materials. An interesting theme discussed here is that of the refloating of stranded vessels and the associated removal of ballast or jettisoned materials to assist with the refloating. Oral and documented histories of such activities contribute to understanding the archaeological signatures discussed in the following chapters.

Having provided an in-depth historical view of the Queenscliffe community’s behaviours and processes related to shipping mishaps, chapters six and seven look at how these are reflected physically through ‘Landscapes of Risk Prevention and Mitigation’ and ‘Landscapes of Crisis and Long-Term Response’ respectively. In breaking down the physical signatures by type, a comprehensive description is given of the changing physical environment and the extant remains of terrestrial and submarine structures such as lighthouses, beacons, pile lights, etc., and of the archaeology associated with the more ephemeral maritime activities associated with lightships, strandings, and shipwreck looting and caching. The following chapter (eight) unifies its precursors through the revision of the social and physical characteristics that contribute to Queenscliffe’s cultural landscape. Through this, the complex nature of community responses to shipping mishaps, coupled with the necessity to adapt over time dependent on social, economic, political and environmental issues is made apparent. The outcome is detailed insight into the multi-faceted cultural constructs of a coastal community specifically related to shipping mishaps that go well beyond the physical evidence of maritime archaeology.

Please God Send Me a Wreck is a recommended read for maritime and historical archaeologists alike, and especially for those like myself with an interest in maritime cultural landscapes or maritime history in general. Academically driven, the volume clearly allows the reader to fully grasp the concept of what a maritime cultural landscape is, and is not. Although the structure of the volume leads to a slight feeling of repetition, the methodology behind it justifies the actions.

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Adrian Praetzelis, *Archaeological Theory in a Nutshell*. Left Coast Press, California, 2015, 224 pages; paperback; ISBN 9781629581590. USD \$29.95.

Archaeological theory is often regarded as the dry and indigestible part of archaeology, while other more popular topics such as ancient civilisations look far more exciting. This book attempts to address this problem by providing a highly accessible guide to archaeological theory. Illustrations keep the reader visually stimulated as well as throwing in some light humour. Designed for students, Adrian Praetzelis’s book discusses the main theories relevant to archaeology, including Marxism, feminism, structuralism and materiality. He provides easy reference and discussion points at the end of each topic, to incite debate for small groups or tutorials and to engage with the audience. The further reading list is a great reference guide and a starting point to delve deeper into researching the topic. Commonly used terms and topics throughout the book are covered in the phrasebook (Chapter

15), which is designed to help prompt the reader in plain English and refresh even the seasoned archaeologist.

The book contains 15 chapters and the author takes a linear approach by presenting a synthesis of topics. Chapter One introduces theory to the reader, how it works and why it is important to archaeology. This chapter helps the reader understand the background to archaeological theory and to consider the aims of the book. In Chapter Two, 'Neoevolutionism', Praetzellis presents the evolution of social theory in archaeology, from chiefdoms to archaic states, and sums up the topic by discussing the key proponents of this approach. Chapter Three, 'Marxism', simply explains the dual purpose of the theory, which provides an explanation of how society works and a 'revolutionary plan for change'. This theory is viewed as deterministic in archaeological practice, that class struggle is a factor of change and can be explained for the particular results of a site. The next topic which flows from Marxism is 'Critical Theory' discussed in Chapter Four. This theoretical approach focuses on ideology in archaeology, one example used by the author being the recursive power of artefacts (the belief that artefacts actively influence human actions). Chapter Five discusses 'Postcolonialism', where the author suggests this theory is not applied in a static approach but as a way to look further into the conditions of minority indigenous social groups and how they were most impacted by colonialism. 'Feminism' in Chapter Six is a 'theory heavy movement' in archaeology, bringing light into gender roles often missing in history. Chapter Seven discusses 'Queer Theory', which is defined as a series of ideas that essentially challenge archaeologists to look at different perspectives. Praetzellis uses the example of Casella's research on the Ross Female Factory in Tasmania, where buttons were discovered in solitary confinement, and the only functional use for them was presumed to be as currency for sexual favours and contraband.

In Chapter Eight, 'Structuralism' is one of the easier theories to comprehend as the approach is bound by previous

notions of the unchanging structures of the human mind. In archaeology, structuralism can be used to explore, for example, the unconscious decision a potter makes when creating a ceramic vessel and, like houses, these belong to the material environment. 'Agency and Structure' (Chapter Nine) follows on from the previous chapter, defining agency as individuals having an active part to play in their lives and therefore in archaeology; influencing material culture by what they decide to use/consume.

The theory of 'Transgressive Archaeologies' in Chapter Ten is not a theory familiar to me and the author starts the chapter by admitting this category is made up. I find transgressive archaeology interesting as it takes a multivocal approach, although many archaeologists are sceptical about it. In Chapter Eleven, 'Archaeological Biography' discusses the theoretical approach of examining individuals, households and families using archaeology. Chapter Twelve, 'Phenomenology' is used in archaeology to explore culturally formed landscapes, as phenomenology is the study of subjective human experience. 'Materiality' (Chapter Thirteen) is a more recent idea in archaeology where material objects are seen as a reflection of ourselves. In the final chapter, Praetzellis does well to summarise the context of theory in archaeology today. He comments on archaeologists examining previous theories and taking a *bricolage* approach to their research aims, while other archaeologists may stick to more of an interpretive approach.

In summary, the book provides a very accessible introduction to theory in archaeology for all audiences, while new archaeology students would most benefit from such a text. Written in an informal style, this book provides a fun and interesting way to learn archaeological theory.

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