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Review of Yannis Hamilakis. *Archaeology and The Senses: Human Experience, Memory, and Affect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, xiii + 255pp., 26 b/w figs., hbk, ISBN 978-0-521-83728-6)

Yannis Hamilakis provides a very different framework for incorporating the senses into the construction of the past using archaeological research – a framework that might be a challenge for those who understand the senses as a tool to enrich and elaborate their interpretations and explanations of archaeological data. In this book Hamilakis turns on its head the traditional understanding of the senses as epiphenomena of more powerful forces that drive history by forefronting them as *the* driving forces in a history that is constructed as the affective, event-based, and practice-oriented construction about real people.

To those who have read other works by Hamilakis, the clear explication of his anti-modernist anti-colonialist standpoint that is expressed from the outset will be familiar. But there are a number of aspects of his writing in this book that were new to me, including some very intimate and poetic narratives. However, the general thesis that he puts forward was not entirely unexpected, since I had heard and seen its prelude in his Afterword to *Making Senses of the Past* edited by Jo Day (Hamilakis, 2013). The book under review is called *Archaeology and the Senses* in order to draw away from the idea that it is an Archaeology of the Senses or a Sensorial Archaeology, which Hamilakis is at pains to repeat throughout the volume it definitely is not. He is quite explicit that this volume is not a proposal to create a new sub-discipline in archaeology. It is a proposal to look at what we do as archaeologists in a quite different way by enlisting sensorial experience.

This would not be such a novel proposition, given the recent interest in phenomenology and sensorial experience in the broader fields of archaeology, anthropology, history and geography. But Hamilakis puts forward what seems to me a quite novel way of incorporating sensoriality into our interpretations of the past as well as what we do as archaeologists, and how we do it. What he writes here is relevant not just for archaeologists working in the field, but also cultural heritage and museum professionals. As he points out, whether we are speaking of the world of the past or present, ‘There has always been a tension between the anarchic and messy world of the senses ..., and the often politically motivated attempts by various people and groups to regulate and channel sensorial experience, often using material culture and physical and built space.’ (p.15).

In Chapter 1, Hamilakis introduces this different approach to the senses. Many of the arguments of going beyond the strict boundaries of empirical observations of archaeological materials in order to build sensorial awareness of the past have been covered by contributions to *Making Senses of the Past* (Day 2013). Hamilakis’ aim is not to re-present the past but to evoke its presence (see page 6).

After the fiery introductory chapter, Hamilakis starts his Chapter 2 with a genealogy of sensoriality in the context of western Modernism. ‘I show that the construction of the Western sensorium in modernity is embedded within the colonial and national nexus of power..’ (p. 13). His aim is to provide the background to how western modernist archaeologists incorporated the five bodily senses into their research. This latter topic forms the second half of this chapter in which he traces how ‘the official archaeological apparatus’ separated the visual from the multi-sensorial experience and gave it a privileged focus, all as part of a project to regulate and control the uncontrollable senses, especially the ‘less remote’ ones

such as smell, taste, touch and movement that create affectivity. Hamilakis makes the important point in this chapter that ‘in archaeology ...there is a severe sensorial tension...that pitches the heritage of the autonomous, de-sensorised vision against the fundamentally multi-sensorial nature of both the object of archaeological inquiry (i.e. material things) and the archaeological process itself’ (p. 53).

Chapter 3 brings the genealogical exercises of Chapter 2 up to date with the current understanding of sensoriality and archaeology during the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Most of the changes have come from outside archaeology. Feminism and the labour movement in the late twentieth century challenged the ‘regimentation and regulation of bodily sensorial norms’ (p. 108). Cinema with its introduction of movement and sound to the visual image created a sensorial revolution. The privilege of vision was challenged by a return to a multisensorial approach.

Hamilakis gives a fresh look on the sensorial overload and commodification of the multisensorial experience in the twenty-first century, along with an astute and rather pessimistic set of critical observations on the recent attempts at an archaeology of the senses (p. 109), ‘which ...seems to be trapped, more often than not, in a framework set out by the western sensorium and its five senses, devoid of affective power’ (p. 14). Although Hamilakis does not specify examples of such ‘attempts’, as someone who has published articles on a sensorial archaeology, I recognize myself among this group. As a result of reading his book I was quite happy to acknowledge this criticism and am inspired to revisit what I have previously written in terms of Hamilakis’ standpoint. That surely shows the power of his arguments in this book!

The logical stream of his argument leads him to propose a new ontology that would enable archaeologists to use their privileged access to the wealth of the materiality of the world throughout history to its full potential, including revealing undiscovered sensorial modalities. In Chapter 4 he develops such an ontology which draws away from individual senses towards defining a field of sensoriality ‘and [...] the affective and mnemonic flows it engenders’ (p. 14).

The key guiding principles of the new ontology or framework are ‘presented mostly as a series of aphorisms’ (p. 112) which I can re-present here most clearly as a list: (a) The senses are about the nature and status of being; (b) The senses are innumerable and infinite; (c) Archaeology can explore that sensorial infinity as long as they can escape the modernist five senses limitations; (d) From the body and the thing, to the field and the flow of experience. ‘The sensorial field and the sensorial flows encompass material substances, airwaves, rays of light, gestures and movements as well as discourses, affects, memories and ideas’ (p. 116); (e) Sensorial flows are risky and unpredictable; (f) The senses are political; (g) The senses are historical, meaning that they are historically, culturally and socially constituted; (h) Every sensorial perception is ‘full of and shaped by memories [...] it is never [...] pristine experience’ (p. 118); it is worth noting here that Hamilakis values the power of communal memory over that of the individual; (i) Sensorial reflexivity should be the starting point of any sensorial analysis, ‘by excavating our own sensory stratigraphy’ (p. 119); he does this himself in Chapter 1 (p. 11) and in the personal narratives at the beginning of Chapters 3, 4, and 7; (j) The senses are multi-temporal. Taking off from the idea that every sensorial experience involves memory, and ‘every sensorial perception is at the same time past and present’ (p. 122), Hamilakis concludes that archaeology could be recast ‘as a multi-temporal, corporeal and sensorial practice’ (p. 124), since the materials are sensed at multiple times from their

first manipulation in perhaps a distant past to their current incorporation into cultural heritage and other social practices in a complex entanglement of memories, lives, and events; (k) Archaeologies of the senses are also archaeologies of affect. Quite poetically Hamilakis writes that ‘through affectivity sensorial flows and interactions animate the flesh of the world’ (p. 125).

Bringing together these guiding principles, Hamilakis identifies ‘sensorial flows’ that hold together diverse entities that comprise a ‘sensorial assemblage’. A sensorial assemblage is ‘the contingent co-presence of heterogenous (sic) elements such as bodies, things, substances, affects, memories, information and ideas’ (p. 126) that may be convened explicitly as a performance or ritual or less planned as an event or more discretely as a ‘sense of place’. I did miss a sense of multiscalearity in these discussions, though I assumed it was implied.

Chapters 5 and 6 provide the case study to demonstrate how such a sensorial archaeology analysis might take place. Chapter 5 focuses on the domain of family burial places in Early Bronze Age Crete. Chapter 6 follows on, focusing on the ‘palatial phenomenon’ of Middle and Late Bronze Age Crete. Interestingly, I found these chapters the least engaging parts of this book. In spite of this, I did look differently at the Early Bronze Age and especially the Middle/Late Bronze Age of Crete after reading Chapters 5 and 6, but not very much. Perhaps I was already familiar with resisting the modernist interpretations of these archaeological entities. In Chapter 5 the sensorial analysis led Hamilakis away from the modernist interpretation of the Early Bronze Age tombs as expressions of individuality to their interpretation as ‘attempts at prolonging and maintaining mnemonic connections and associations’ (p. 154) of a small community in a trans-corporeal landscape where there were no permanent individual burial places. In Chapter 6, his analysis led Hamilakis to reject entirely the cultural evolutionary interpretation of western modernism that the ‘palaces’ of Middle/Late Bronze Age Crete were centres of political and economic power; he builds rather on the research of the last fifteen years showing that the ‘palaces’ were centres for communal events, rich in multisensorial experience that can be ‘conceived more fruitfully as the materialisation, glorification and celebration of ancestral time, of long-term, sensorial and mnemonic history’ (p. 167).

These chapters are designed to be the climax of Hamilakis’ argument, the high point in which the validity of the new ontology is demonstrated. But for me, the excitement built up over the preceding four chapters fell a little flat, and I think the cause of that lies in the way in which the story was told. Many readers, especially those specializing in the Aegean archaeology, will probably appreciate the academic style and detailed presentation of evidence to support his arguments in these chapters. However, I have to confess that I was not grasped by the affect that was promised, even though I was quite prepared to be ‘affected’.

In Chapter 5 Hamilakis first faces the challenge of how do you write a sensorial archaeology using the long-form narrative demanded of academic writing.. This is a quandary many of us have faced at the end of the twentieth and twenty-first century (Gero & Conkey, 1991; Day, 2013; Van Dyke & Bernbeck, 2015).

The storytelling vignettes that introduce Chapters 3, 4, and 7 are beautifully written and are powerful narratives in their own right. For me, the most powerful demonstration of the possibilities of the sensorial paradigm is Hamilakis’ narrative about the Vietnam War memorial in Washington that introduces the concluding Chapter 7. By contrast, his narratives that demonstrate the sensorial paradigm using the archaeology of Bronze Age Crete, are pedestrian and do not have the brilliant affect of his personal stories of sensorial experience.

He ‘attempts to combine academic essay and storytelling. [...] it is an experiment in narrating a series of vignettes, fragments of material and sensuous lifeworlds, hopefully retaining and conveying the texture and carnality of intersubjective and trans-corporeal experience’ (p. 130). While reading the tour of a *tholos* tomb narrated by someone following the burial team (p. 131–8) I have constant questions such as: Who am I, the narrator? The teller of the tale in Chapter 5 diverges frequently from his narrative path with academic discussions and very academic language, so we assume that it is that 40-year old white male described on page 11; To whom am I telling this story? Whatever is the social and historical context of that episode of voyeurism? Who are the others (non-playing characters) in the story? To me these questions are legitimate topics for discussion in a demonstration of archaeological sensoriality. Just as Hamilakis is most successful in creating affect in his personal vignettes, these archaeological narratives could have been as successful when told at an equally intimate scale. I personally believe that long-form narrative is not the ideal format to tell such stories; Kathleen Stewart (2007) (whom Hamilakis clearly admires, as do I) chose a format of fragments to write her *Ordinary Affects*. I think that if Hamilakis had actually kept to his aim for fragmentary archaeological narratives, they might have been more successful.

My conclusion is that what Hamilakis proposes in his first four chapters will need a great (but not impossible) effort to put it into practice. The book ends on such a buoyant note, which I fully support: ‘Sensoriality and affectivity ... enable and invite a radically different approach to the presentation of the archaeological work’ (p. 201). By the time he is finished with book, Hamilakis is even ready to throw the ‘archaeo’ out of ‘archaeology’! With or without ‘archaeo’ the book will make a huge contribution to re-thinking this discipline.

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