From Theatre to Labyrinth:
In Pursuit of Critical Engagement with Archaeological Heritage
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Volume I: The Thesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Reception                                                              1
1.2 From Simonides to S.                                                  6
1.3 From Institutional Meanings to Ecologies                             7
1.4 Chapters’ Synopsis                                                   11

**CHAPTER 2: INTERDISCIPLINARY FRAME OF THE THESIS**

2.1 A Cognitive Perspective of Culture                                   23
2.2 Reconceptualising Truth, Objectivity and Knowledge                   24
2.3 The Integrated Theory of Metaphors                                   27
2.4 A Cultural Perspective of Cognition                                  40
2.5 From Cognitive to Cultural Models                                    45
2.6 Material Anchors of Conceptual Blends                                47
2.7 Conclusions                                                          48

**CHAPTER 3: KNOW-HOW**

3.1 The Use of Anthropological Methods in Heritage Studies               51
3.2 Cognitive Ethnographies                                              55
3.3 From Boundaries to Densities of Cognitive Ecologies                 57
3.4 Introduction to the Cognitive Ecologies of Engagement               61
3.5 Popular Strategies of Engagement with Archaeological Heritage       62
3.6 The Selection of Engagement Ecologies                               68
3.7 The Challenges of Cognitive Ethnography in Public Spaces            71
CHAPTER 8: SURVEYING THE EPHEMERAL REMAINS OF CAITHNESS

8.1 Introduction

8.2 The Call for Participants

8.3 The Journey through Physical and Social Space

8.4 The Conceptual Space of the Archaeological Workshop

8.6 The Conceptual Space of Doctoral Research

8.7 Ethnographic Investigation of the Archaeological Workshop

8.8 Stage 1: Anchoring

8.9 Stage 2: Wandering

8.10 Stage 3: Detachment

8.11 Stage 4: Collective Binding
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In 1897, Salomon August Andrée, Knut Frænkel and Nils Strindberg used a hydrogen balloon to fly over the North Pole. The balloon departed from Sweden and crashed to an ice pack near the Arctic Circle. The expedition failed and the three men died under unknown circumstances. Andree’s expedition log, a few messages sent before the crash, Strindberg photographic plates and part of their equipment were recovered in 1930 during another expedition to the Arctic. While the initial aim to cross the North Pole was not accomplished, the 1897 expedition explored the boundaries of the Arctic Circle, tested the limitations of its navigation technologies and strategies, and produced a record of the difficulties that the ill-fated team encountered. The story is here abbreviated as a metaphor for the adventurous and ambitious journey of theorising complex cultural phenomena, like engagement with heritage.

This thesis is similarly the diary of an overly ambitious journey that set out to identify architectures that support memory four years ago and finally investigated spatial metaphors that shape institutional interaction with remains of the past. The unfamiliar land that my research explores expands between the borders of heritage and cognitive studies. The hydrogen balloon stands for the ethnographic methods adopted; trustworthy or faulty, the means of cognitive ethnography allowed me to explore the ‘interaction with past remains is engagement with heritage’ metaphor. It also brought me closer to my precious North Pole, to the study of distributed mnemonic processes. Primary intentions and chosen methods have determined only to a certain degree how far I went and how safe my journey was. A series of lucky interventions and accidents also affected its outcomes. The peer reviews of my first
articles, my presentations in conferences, the discussions with my supervisors but also the uncontrolled occurrence of study cases led me towards new ground. The evaluation of this journey is essentially equivalent to the evaluation of its official record. Finally, as most expeditions, this journey has its motivators, instigators, and benefactors.

Starting with those who inspired the journey (the three supervisors of my MSc dissertation, Prof. Kostantinos Moraitis, Prof. Stavros Stavridis, and Prof. Panagiotis Tournikiotis and my distant friends Somya and Andreas), I also wish to thank those who filled my balloon with hope and confidence, my beloved parents Sophia and Ilias and my sister Evi. I am immensely grateful to my companion for life, Ilias, who embarked on the same balloon only to convince me that I can do it. The journey would have never taken place if it were not for those who structured my ambition and taught me all essential navigation strategies, my insightful supervisors Prof. Richard Coyne and Prof. John Lee. Finally, the thesis owes its inspiration and originality to those who offered shelter when there was much turbulence, to my beloved friend John Barber, the managing director of AOC Archaeology Group Andrew Heald, the museum educator Christine Grady and all Caithness and Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum participants. I am also grateful to all those that having embarked on similar journeys made my arctic zone less strange or unfamiliar (my friends and colleagues from the University of Edinburgh). Last but not least, I could not be less grateful to the insightful strangers, the unaware advisors whose words I have used to support my thesis, such as Maurice Halbwachs, Alexander Luria, Frances A. Yates, Edwin Hutchins, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, to name but a few.

viii
ABSTRACT

In western cultural institutions, meaningful interaction with remains of the past is predominantly discussed as *engagement with heritage*. The complex metaphor helps us conceptualise the abstract notion of interaction as *engagement*, an obligation or a state of captivity, and remains of the past as *heritage*, a series of possessions transferred from time-past to present. The thesis takes a cognitive linguistics approach to examine both primary and complex spatial metaphors that support western conceptualisations of interaction with past remains. It also employs the means of cognitive ethnography to examine their effects on two ecologies of engagement: (i) a storytelling and object handling workshop hosted in the Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery, and (ii) a workshop of archaeological practices held in the moorlands of Caithness. The passage from public to professional ecologies serves the identification of those spatial metaphors, conditions and practices that can support critical engagement with archaeological heritage.

In the thesis, I suggest that, in western tradition, time-past is predominantly conceptualised as a constraining space, and interaction with its remains as a form of captivity: of containment in, entanglement with and overview of a constraining past *locus*. These three spatial metaphors give rise to at least two more complex ones, to past as a theatre and past as a labyrinth. While the theatrical metaphor dominates the design of public engagement programmes, the ethnographic investigation reveals that practices of professional engagement are mainly shaped by the labyrinthine metaphor. It also shows that while the theatrical and the labyrinthine metaphors are reverse syntheses of the three captivity metaphors, each of them addresses past spaces with different needs and qualities. The theatrical metaphor supports the
immersive confinement of the heritage audience in coherent and delineated past *locis*, and by extension its engagement with a familiar heritage. In contrast, the labyrinthine metaphor shapes the adventurous exploration and the distant examination of obscure and open-ended past *locis* by heritage professionals, and therefore their engagement with an unfamiliar heritage.

In the thesis, I ultimately conclude that the labyrinthine metaphor juxtaposes the risky flights of Daedalus and the entangled explorations of Theseus and Ariadne to the safe confinement of the Minotaur. It therefore gives rise to cultural practices that can support critical and enquiring forms of engagement, by helping us to transgress our inherently contested heritage before we surrender to its coherent versions.


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