

direct response to the changed relations between nations, some cultural property has already been returned to its country of origin. Thus some sixty pieces have been restored to Zaire by the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale in Belgium; many objects have been returned to Indonesia by the Museum of Ethnography in Leiden; the Peabody Museum of Harvard University has returned material to Mexico and Guatemala; the Australian government has returned a large collection to Papua-New Guinea; the British government has restored to Burma the throne and crown jewels captured in the Second Burmese War of 1853. Many of the museums concerned were forbidden by

their statutes, as is the British Museum, to alienate any object in their collection. But the law is made for people, not people for the law. The legislators were ready to modify their own local regulations in the interests of international justice. Parliament bought the Parthenon Marbles from Lord Elgin and charged the British Museum to look after them. It is up to Parliament to consider whether the time has not now come for it to change its instructions. The whole question should be the subject of a debate, in which due weight can be given to the historical, legal, aesthetic, and moral arguments involved. This time the matter will not be forgotten.

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WILDMEN, PULP AND FIRE -
ARCHAEOLOGY AS POPULAR FICTION

Christopher J. Evans

There is obviously a substantial public demand for archaeologically related literature and archaeologists do occasionally descend to produce works for the non-academic market. However, those books which are penned by popular novelists and which have an archaeological content, usually far outstrip the sales of professionally acceptable archaeological reading for the general public. This growing literary genre is only rarely considered by archaeologists and yet, as reflected in their vast readership, these works must be a major influence in shaping the public's attitudes towards the past. This short review will consider Jean M. Auel's recent novel, The Clan of the Cave Bear, within the context of popular prehistoric fiction.

Auel's novel depicts the domestic life of a band of Neanderthals living in the Crimea during the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic transition, 35-25,000 BP. This

enormously successful novel suffers from its pulp packaging which does its utmost to disguise what is a very interesting and informative novel. The plot revolves around the character, Ayla, a Homo sapiens sapiens who is orphaned by an earthquake and subsequently adopted by the Neanderthal clan. Over some 500 pages we are witness to the clan's daily life and Ayla's development from child to adult within the context of Neanderthal cave society.

The author's narrative style is straightforward, Auel has none of the literary ambitions of Golding's The Inheritors or Grass's The Flounder. While the novel's unassuming literary style makes its characters more immediately accessible to the reader, it does, however, lack the exploration of different perceptual and communication processes which Golding dealt with so thoroughly. It is, of course, very difficult to express non-literate concepts in written form without making for awkward reading. In this regard, Annaud's film Quest for Fire, with its oral languages invented by Anthony Burgess and gestures by Desmond Morris, was

very successful, certainly more so than Rosny-Aine's original text.

Auel's novel does present us with a very convincing picture of Upper Pleistocene life and in doing so she extensively uses archaeological and ethnographic data. Solecki's Neanderthal burials at Shanidar are the source both for the character of Creb, the novel's crippled and one-handed shaman, and for a flower strewn inhumation. There is a ritual brain eating, harking back to the Monte Circeo skull, and there are numerous cave bear rituals directly inspired from the Drachenloch site. The novel's main ritual ceremony apparently has as its source the bear rites of the Ainu hunters of Northern Japan. Apart from these direct archaeological quotations, Auel's book is rich in detail concerning the subsistence activities of the Neanderthals. There are flint knapping lessons in the Levallois technique, a rare mammoth hunt, basket and net making, food preparation, and even Lepenski Vir-like days of catching sturgeon on the Black Sea coast.

Within this prehistoric panorama the Neanderthals are depicted as being well adapted to and fully exploiting their local environment. The economic and ecological factors which determine their existence are fully described and the novel is, in fact, framed by catastrophic earthquakes. However, the author gives great emphasis to the social structure and symbolic order of the Neanderthal band, concentrating on social conflicts within the cave in which Ayla naturally becomes the focal point. The Neanderthal band is structured along classic 'Man the Hunter' lines, in which male and female activities are strictly divided: hunting and rituals are male prerogatives, while food gathering and medicine are woman's work. Ayla, as the outsider, breaks this structure by first becoming 'the Woman who hunts' and later by secretly observing the

shaman's key rituals.

Though Auel's Neanderthals have only a monosyllabic vocabulary, they have a highly developed sign language, and while not unintelligent, their mental powers are essentially rooted in their deep memory. Ayla, on the other hand, comes to the clan with a developed vocabulary and the power of abstract and original thought. Ayla is, of course, us, whereas the Neanderthals are rather like a flock of dinosaurs doomed by their lack of cultural evolution in the face of 'the others' vitality. The question of Neanderthal extinction or survival is a very contentious issue, which the author overcomes by having Ayla give birth to a child after she has been raped by a prominent Neanderthal. This crossbreeding ensures that some elements of the Neanderthal way of life will survive. A similar situation is created by Golding in The Inheritors when the 'new people' carry off a Neanderthal infant.

It is relevant to question how prehistoric fiction tackles the problem of cultural change, for effectively it ignores it. This is largely the result of the limited time scale of most of these novels. In Quest for Fire change is actually only diffusion as the Oulhamr people come into contact with a multitude of contemporary groups strung out along the evolutionary ladder. Essentially, biological determinism is the sole agent of cultural development. While Auel does not stress this point too strongly, it remains an underlying theme. Ayla as an individual brings change to the Neanderthal band, but the clan cannot cope with it and hence their foreseeable extinction. However, Ayla is not acting as an individual but rather as an agent of her species, for when Creb telepathically has a vision of the distant future through her, he glimpses our world of aeroplanes and high-rise build-

ings. The mechanics of cultural change and evolution are reduced to genetic coding and are, in effect, fated.

As the reading list of pre-historic fiction grows it should be considered what is its appeal and *raison d'être*. Certainly, as a subject for fiction it is not one which expresses an author's personal experiences of life. Though Auel's novel does consider sexual politics which obviously does have contemporary relevance, its main strength lies in its general educational value and in this regard the author is to be applauded for her thorough research and imaginative reconstruction of Neanderthal society. However, does this account for the book's wide readership, or does it have as much to do with a back-to-the-earth and survivalist ethic, which as an aspect of her personal research is stressed in the author's biographic outline. A glance at the critical blurbs adorning the jacket of the paperback edition give some interesting, if somewhat biased, insights into its potential market: "Real Roots", "A good old-fashioned tale with a spunky Stone-Age tomboy

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COMMENT from John Barrett to M. Braithwaite "Bare-faced, but not naked, ape" *ARC* 1(2):62-3.

As one of the offenders selected by Ms Braithwaite, perhaps I might be allowed to accept fully the criticism levelled by her at my unthinking adoption of current, ideological formulations of asymmetry between male:female.

I say this having just read Pierpoint (1981). In this paper Pierpoint tells us that Levi-Strauss and Turner have "shown the importance of the manner in which man divides up his world, his lands, his goods and his body for the way he organises his society"

named Ayla" and "Our nomination for the year's great escape".

There is a long tradition of 'wild men' in both popular and high western art and literature whose membership runs the gamut from hairy saints to Caliban and King Kong. As a public image, the idea of the existence of non-civilized groups beyond the borders of society has been dually used to define society's own virtues (when opposed to that which is barbaric) and, alternatively, to present a way of life untainted by the vices of society (the concept of the 'noble savage'). With so few physical frontiers remaining for 'wild' survival it seems that the past can also fulfil this social need. Certainly, to some degree, the growth of popular fiction which sympathetically presents a distant past, can be considered as an index of dissatisfaction with the twentieth century present. While it would be a pity if Jean Auel's novel was not given greater attention except in the context of temporal escapism, it remains a very good example of archaeology serving the present.

(p. 47). Indeed, Pierpoint then goes on to 'show' that in the Yorkshire barrows a greater proportion of primary graves contain males than they do women or children. This is then taken further through an analysis of associated artefacts, "the fine vessels (beakers) were placed with males, and the poor quality ones with women and children" (p. 52).

Pierpoint's is an interesting paper and there are a number of ways in which we might approach it. We might ask, for example, whether his Fig. 4.3 does indeed represent the "clear dichotomy" between male and female burial, of which he speaks. We might note that in his

Figs. 4.5 and 4.6 solid circles = male, whilst open circles = women/children/sex unknown/age unknown; a representation thus perpetuating the visible:invisible distinction noted by Ms Braithwaite. However a further, worrying, point is the nature of the original data. I do not know the details of the skeletal identifications which are used in this analysis, but it does seem likely that the sexing of skeletons is a more complex task than we sometimes like to believe. Is it possible that sex identification took place in the light of the position in which the body had been recovered and the 'quality' of the associated grave goods? And if this is so is it not inherently likely that the 'primary' and 'rich' graves would be regarded as male whilst the 'secondary' and 'poor' graves taken to represent the passive and invisible world of women, children and 'unknowns'?

Age. in *Prehistoric Communities in Northern England* ed. G.Barker, 41-56. Sheffield University, Sheffield.

Roesdahl, E., J. Graham-Campbell, P. Connar and K. Pearson (eds) 1981 *The Vikings in England and in their Danish Homeland*. The Anglo-Danish Viking Project, London.

REPLY from Mary Braithwaite:

I should just like to add one further comment on the problem of 'androcentrism' in archaeology. John Barrett rightly says that "the formation of the past in our own image ... is an area which archaeologists ... must identify and investigate". The problem is that these images are *simultaneously* ethnocentric and androcentric - ethnocentric biases are inevitably also androcentric biases, for that is the nature of our culture and language. Gender biases as apparent as those noted by John Barrett are but the tip of an iceberg, although they serve very well as a point of entry into the problems of 'andrenthocentrism' (if I might coin a new word). When it is understood that *all* our theories are based on particular evaluations of the relative significance of different areas and forms of activity in societies, and on particular ways of categorising social action then the problem can be seen as immense. For instance, various contrasts used in the description and understanding of social life, such as public/domestic, hunter/gatherer, are not only rooted in particular (political and cultural) conceptions, but carry value judgements about their relative significance for understanding social structure and change that are rooted in those same political and cultural perspectives. The task of exposing our biases is vast.

I have not written this letter as an attack upon Pierpoint, nor I hope as an attempt to salve my own conscience. I am sure that Pierpoint would be as surprised to read this as I was to read Ms Braithwaite's original note. But the formation of the past in our own image (whether we like that image or not) is an area which archaeologists, and historians, must identify and investigate. In the catalogue of the current York exhibition "The Vikings in England" there is, on page 106, a drawing in which a Viking woman stands behind, and on one side of, a Viking man. She is to his left, and in the perspective of the drawing shorter than he. His image impinges upon hers. It will, I fear, be some time before archaeologists, let alone the visitors to such an exhibition, recognise the subtlety and power in such a representation.

Pierpoint, S. 1981 Land, settlement and society in the Yorkshire Bronze

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