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The Process and Me: Creating a Film About Archaeology

Jack Woods, Class of 2023

DePauw University Honor Scholar Program

Dr. Rebecca Schindler, Professor Jonathon Nichols-Pethick, James Olsen

Acknowledgements:

First and foremost, I would like to thank Professors Rebecca Schindler and Pedar Foss for allowing me to accompany them to Castiglione del Lago, Italy this past summer to film their ongoing archaeological research campaign. Because I was diving into an area of research to which I had no prior knowledge, I felt nervous about navigating the difficulties of constructing a film within an area of media that has been misrepresented and overdramatized. Both Schindler and Foss dedicate a portion of the research campaign to teaching the ethics of archaeology, which significantly influence both the film and this thesis. They understand the challenges of creating a documentary that does not violate the academic nature of the work and also believe this project to be important to archaeology as it is represented in the media. Because of them, I grasp the importance in executing this project properly to accurately display the extensive methods to excavate an archaeological site.

I would also like to thank Jonathon Nichols-Pethick, Larry Abed, Chris Newton, Marilyn Culler and Greg Stefon for their continual support and dedication to providing me the tools to be successful. I felt capable of traveling to a foreign country with merely a camera and a concept because they taught me the practical skills on how to culminate projects like these, how to absorb constructive feedback and to keep trying. I am humbled and appreciative that they choose to support me, for I appreciate who they are just as much as I do their tutelage. I would also like to extend a personal thanks to James “JP” Olsen, a filmmaking connoisseur with an expertise in documentaries, the latest addition to the Pulliam Center family, and a fantastic person as well.

In addition to my DePauw audience, this project is also intended for the people of Castiglione del Lago as a token of thanks, as this project would not be possible if they would not

allow us to excavate parts of their landscape, and incidentally for students at DePauw who may be interested in the classics department or studying archaeology at DePauw.

And to Mom, Dad, Rachel, Ivana, and McKenzie, as always, I cannot express enough gratitude for all of your support and love. Someone very wise once told me “It takes a village to raise someone” and you all are my village. I love you all, and I hope you enjoy my work.

Abstract:

The film I created is entitled “The Bomb: The 2022 Trasimeno Regional Archaeological Project.” It documents the research methods used to ethically excavate an archaeological site and presents Professor Rebecca Schindler and Pedar Foss’s research from Castiglione del Lago, Italy. The stakes of the project are as follows: I wanted to create an entertaining documentary about the process of ethically excavating an archaeological dig site through the 2022 Trasimeno Regional Archaeology Project (TRAP) in Castiglione del Lago, Italy. This thesis contains three parts: Analysis of Archaeology in the Media, where I analyze two TV shows about archaeology as the main topic, On The Site, where I discuss what my thought process looked like during filming, and Reflections, where I analyze my strengths as a filmmaker and producer, as well as offer insight into my directorial choices. One of the primary focuses of the film will be how the research is presented, and that will be documented in the thesis below.

My film attempts to display ethical archaeological practices and takes a different directorial approach from typical stereotypes of archaeology in the media. I address these stereotypes in the Analysis of Archaeology in the Media. My film attempts to illustrate the process to excavate a dig site and what I could do to ensure I was capturing the best footage. I address these issues in On The Site. My film attempts to find humor as my way of providing entertainment and perspective as a filmmaker. I address this directorial choice in the Reflections.

The Trasimeno Regional Archaeological Project:

This section covers the mission statement, the goals, and the findings of the ongoing Trasimeno Regional Archaeological Project that conducted archaeological research in central Italy. This section will also cover the distinction of ethical archaeological research. Per the TRAP Report on the 2022 Excavations Ranciano, Castiglione del Lago (PG) written by Professor Rebecca Schindler,

“In 2022, the Trasimeno Regional Archaeology Project (TRAP) initiated an excavation in località Ranciano, six kilometers to the southwest of Castiglione del Lago. This new research expands TRAP’s mission to investigate the Roman presence in the territory of Castiglione del Lago in order to better understand the transition from the Etruscan to Roman occupation and the Roman exploitation of the territory.”

During the project’s length, the group of eighteen students participating in the excavation were required to complete two courses, one called Archaeology in Central Italy and the other called Archaeological Field Workshop. We learned about the history of Central Italy, the history of archaeology in Italy, the importance of archaeology, and similar topics over a six week program. Because our dig permit was not ready when the group arrived, instead of having a mixed schedule of excavating and class time, the first half of the project was dedicated to research and the classes, whereas the second half of the project was dedicated to the excavation of the dig site.

We only had nine days on the site before the discovery of a WWII mortar shell shut down the excavation. Per the TRAP report,

“Although excavations were only conducted for nine days due to the discovery of the remains of a WWII mortar shell, they revealed enough to provide a preliminary understanding of the site and its occupation history. Recovered ceramic materials indicate that the Roman occupation included both Republican and Imperial phases, including a late Imperial phase when the site may have been destroyed by fire. At the end of the Roman period this site, like most others in the lower Chiana River valley was abandoned due to the swampy and malarial conditions in the region. Use of the Ranciano site resumed, albeit briefly, in the Medieval period

when the Roman remains were pillaged and reused by villagers for the construction of buildings in the present village of Ranciano.”

Within nine days, the group discovered artifacts from three different time periods. The group held inventories of Roman artifacts from the first day, and a few artifacts stood out from the typical ceramic finding. Per the TRAP report, there was a “Gem depicting a man and a goat in front of a tree branch, carnelian” and large collections of tile and brick. Some fragments of bronze were also found. The group also made geographical discoveries, such as Alpha Trench and the Medieval kiln, which “was identified with the remains of the burnt limestone visible on the interior.” This research project is ongoing, so this thesis is merely one chapter of the larger project.

Ethics in archaeology is about presentation of facts and methodology. People have to understand how archaeologists obtained the information from excavation if they are to trust the information. Some unethical practices of archaeologists include robbing a site of artifacts simply for museum display. Some include stealing artifacts from a site to sell to vendors. Other practices include deliberately misrepresenting facts about the past through archaeology or using facts obtained from archaeological research to create harmful rhetoric. Some of these practices will be discussed below.

From what I learned from Professor Schindler and Foss, these are the steps to ethically excavating a dig site. First and foremost, they made the intentions of the research project clear: to better understand and provide historical information about the area of Castiglione del Lago, specifically pertaining to Roman occupation and exploitation. More than anything, they ensured that we were aware of our intentions. The process of ethically digging an archaeological site first involves non-intrusive methods, or methods that do not involve actual excavation.

Archaeologists may use geological surveys, satellite GPS coordinates, and local research to

determine the location of a dig site. Other research methods include using a magnetometer to detect magnetic anomalies of various types which help determine the dig site's location as well. After conducting the necessary preliminary research, archaeologists begin collecting and analyzing the evidence.

Collecting and analyzing evidence includes actual excavation, which means digging. Archaeologists use tools like pickaxes and trowels to pierce the ground, and from there, they will establish the grid of the site to determine the trench lines. It's important to set the trench lines to control where each stratum is, so they can accurately reconstruct the process of deposition (when rock and soil sediments are added to the surface). Some depositions are natural; for example, the accumulation of soil over many hundreds of years. Some depositions are man made, such as the construction of a wall or a kiln. When archaeologists dig, the goal is to uncover each deposition layer in the reverse order from which it was created. After collecting the evidence from the dig site, archaeologists will then document and place artifacts in inventory. Inventory includes categorizing where each artifact was found and if some pieces fit with each other. They then apply historical context to the discoveries, and then and only then do archaeologists make determinations about the past.

Analysis of Archaeology in the Media:

The dissemination of archaeological research helps the general public formulate opinions about the past and better contextualize the world we live in today. The key issues of archaeological media that I am addressing below are related to the presentation of the research and its academic integrity. It is important to present archaeological research because misinterpreted ideas of the past can inflame heightened social issues or create nationalistic dogma. It is important to present the methodology to obtain archaeological research because

archaeological research shapes much of what we know about the past, and asking questions about how we obtained information about the past can lead to further research.

There are various types of media in which archaeology is presented. When archaeology is the main topic, the presentation tends to be more informative. Documentaries about archaeology are typically educational and focused on discoveries. TV shows about archaeology are similar to documentaries because they both focus more on what is uncovered more than anything else. Sometimes, archaeology is used as more of a plot device rather than the main topic, such as the Indiana Jones movie franchise. Even in some TV shows, such as Disney Plus's *Moon Knight* which presents Layla El-Faouly as an archaeologist/adventuress, presenting the academic aspects of archaeology is sometimes ignored for the sake of entertainment.

“Archaeology is the search for fact, not truth... So forget any ideas you have of lost cities, exotic travels, and digging up the world. We do not follow maps to buried treasure and X never, ever marks the spot,” Indiana Jones tells his archaeology class in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. I find this sentiment to be ironic considering Jones had stolen a golden idol from the Temple of Doom at the beginning of the movie. When looking at the first film alone, from when he raids the Temple of Doom to when he commits a murder in broad daylight in front of a crowd to the fact that Jones's work opposes Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, it becomes quite clear that Jones' approach to archaeology is not purely academic, rather he is an adventurer with the title of an archaeologist. Because the Indiana Jones film series uses archaeology as a plot device, it may seem like a prime example of “poor archaeological media.” Holtorf describes, in his opinion, how archaeology is portrayed in poor representations: “When it refers back to the past, much archaeological appeal derives from idealized cliches that are nothing but our own visions superimposed on times gone by” (Holtorf 10). The movies are keen on overdramatizing the

actual work of an archaeologist, as the elaborate and adventurous quests of Jones are marked with violence, romance, and a battle between good and evil. It is clear that this representation of archaeology is fictional. Portrayals like these are not inherently bad for the academic integrity of archaeology because in this particular case, the writers of Indiana Jones are not presenting the story as historical fact.

Representations of archaeology in the media directly impact the public perception of the work archaeologists do. The primary challenge of this project was to create an entertaining documentary that did not betray the essence of archaeological research. To understand the importance of my project, one must understand the frustrations that archaeologists and scholars of Classical Studies experience when representations of archaeology in the media undermines the strategic and deliberate methods used to excavate and analyze a dig site. I analyzed Cornelius Holtorf's *Archaeology Is a Brand: The Meaning of Archaeology in Contemporary Popular Culture* and Timothy Clack and Marcus Brittain's *Archaeology and the Media*, and I have identified several methods that producers use to create entertaining media about archaeology: Unnecessarily Heightening the Stakes, Overdramatizing History, and a Narrator with an Agenda. I believe these methods to be the reason why some representations of archaeology in the media can be considered ethical and unethical. Ethical representations do not betray the essence of archaeological research, whereas unethical representations tend to misrepresent either the process of excavation or the facts of history. When producers of media concerning archaeology implement these strategies, they can create and/or reinforce unwanted stereotypes surrounding the profession. These stereotypes undermine the legitimacy of an archaeologist's research and ultimately misrepresent the methods through which archaeologists determine facts about history.

It is important to understand that each of these methods undercut archaeological research in their own particular way.

Considering there are numerous examples of archaeology in the media, one may determine that archaeological media is an industry in of itself. I analyzed two sources of archaeology in the media: *Ancient Apocalypse*, a new series by British media personality Graham Hancock and promoted through Netflix, and *Time Team Britain*, an older series by British actor Tony Robinson and produced through the BBC. *Ancient Apocalypse* follows Hancock to several different archaeological dig sites around the world as he suggests different theories to history, while *Time Team Britain* shows Robinson and a team of archaeologists on numerous dig sites performing archaeological research. In order to maintain interest in their viewers, some producers will unnecessarily heighten the stakes to evoke a stronger emotion from their viewers. *Ancient Apocalypse* uses this method in the episode “America’s Lost Civilization,” where Graham Hancock took a production crew to investigate large mounds of earth in Ohio. There, he claims that “the few sites that survived may be critical in establishing the possibility of a lost civilization.” The implication of ‘the few sites that survived’ indicates that perhaps Hancock is focusing on the lack of data from the lack of dig sites and implying that if more data were available, the information would be different from what archaeologists have determined. He’s playing with the notion of scarcity; this inherently shapes the show’s drama and quietly raises the stakes. Hancock also emphasizes words like ‘critical’ and ‘possibility’ to later modify ‘lost civilization’ at the end of the sentence. Using words like these sparks interest in the audience’s mind, but Hancock cannot (and does not) confirm that mounds are indicative of any undiscovered civilization, because he is trying to ‘establish the possibility.’ The key word in this sentence is ‘establish,’ meaning Hancock’s theories are not yet proven, therefore are not rooted

in fact. Hancock is using the lack of facts to create his own reality, highlighting a reason as to why this is an unethical representation of archaeology in the media.

In both television and movies, another method to form excitement around archaeology is to over dramatize history. Hancock and his team excel at this in “America’s Lost Civilization,” as he boldly suggests that “the multiple post circles of Poverty Point also {could} have been designed to track something in the heavens.” He is referencing the fact that prehistoric civilizations used astronomy and implies that archaeologists do not take that claim seriously. The reason he was able to deduce this (and more importantly, not as an actual archaeologist) is because he says “I think that the reason...is because most archaeologists don’t understand astronomy at all.” Hancock inflates an imaginary conflict between archaeologists and astronomers by implying archaeologists do not respect astronomers, while attempting to make his theories seem believable by creating doubt about the work of real archaeologists. This insinuation is deliberately setting up false tension between archaeologists and astronomers to create drama. The psychology behind Hancock’s sentiments is to undermine the credibility of accredited archaeologists and provide a baseless, general theory that replaces the actual research. Hancock essentially implies that archaeologists won’t accept any other theory about Poverty Point because they won’t fully incorporate all methods of research to understand it; to soften the blow of this implication, he frames the argument like archaeologists *would* validate his theory if they were to implement astronomy into their research. This claim can be contested, as Hancock provides no basis for his belief.

In fact, that entire last paragraph is Hancock’s point: at the end of that paragraph, I wasn’t talking about archaeology or science or reason, I was talking about Graham Hancock. This alludes to another method to make archaeological media interesting: a narrator with an agenda.

Hancock's agenda is to discredit archaeologists by insinuating that because they do not have all of the facts of history, they are deliberately hiding information to maintain some sort of sense of control of how the past is interpreted. He leans into the supposed conflict between archaeologists and astronomers to further discredit archaeology. When interviewing the site manager of Poverty Point, Hancock presents him like this: "Site manager and historian Mark Brink, Jr. is the first to admit that mainstream archaeology hasn't been able to confirm much about this mysterious site." Here is where Hancock's agenda shines. Hancock refers to the idea of 'mainstream archaeology' as it works against his claims about the past. Obviously, the key words are 'mainstream archaeology,' but the subtlety in the language is more poignant than one might realize. With the supposed conflict between archaeologists and astronomers in mind, Hancock is implying archaeologists 'have not been able to confirm much,' because they have been confined to their interpretation of the past.

In the realm of archaeological media, most representations do not adequately portray archaeological methods and interpretations correctly. However, there are clear distinctions on what influences public perception of archaeology. Television shows and movies that feature archaeologists as protagonists can contribute to a positive perception. What makes "good" archaeological media is the producer's attempts to release information about the findings of excavation and its practical historical appliance. One popular television show about archaeology is *Time Team Britain*, an ongoing series first seen on the History Channel¹ and now a limited series produced on YouTube. What makes *Time Team Britain* more accurate and true to archaeology is the attention to proper excavation and research techniques. It is reasonable to assume Robinson and his team were not misleading the public or editing the shows in such a way that would diminish the actual archaeological research being presented, as he asks the

¹ First broadcast: 16 January 1994, British Public Broadcasting, Channel 4

archaeologists to explain their discoveries and their methods to determining facts in the midst of excavation. An example of this would be during *Time Team Britain's* "A Roman Fort That Wasn't There," in the midst of excavation, the team discovered a coin. Then, they explain that the coin is from the 4th century and their reasons for that specific determination.

At the beginning of each *Time Team* episode, in front of the cameras, Tony Robinson carefully explains why the crew will travel to an area within England and attempt to uncover an unsolved mystery, then uses non-destructive research methods first. Holtorf observes that the premise is enough to excite the show's intended audience: "The special characteristic of the *Time Team* format is that, on each site, a fairly down-to-earth, local historical question is being investigated by excavating in front of the cameras" (Holtorf 40). The show brings in multiple perspectives and displays archaeology in practice through illustrative footage. In "The Roman City That Wasn't There", Robinson says "Finding evidence of a Claudian fort here would be major news, because so little is known about the Roman invasion of 43 A.D." The episode then cuts to two historians discussing what they know about the history of Syndale, and most importantly, how they know that information. The historian talks about why the Romans needed to occupy the area of Syndale. Since Syndale's geographical position was near the coastline, the Romans would have likely wanted to control that area, because they built supply bases near the coastlines to hold bulk materials, and those bulk materials were best transported via the sea. After the historian finishes, the next shot shows a large excavator digging a new area for excavation while Robinson narrates what they have been able to determine about the site up until that point in time in the episode. Due to the implementation of scientific research and display of proper excavation techniques, *Time Team Britain* is considered academically honest

archaeological media as it satisfies the audience's need for excitement and maintains academic integrity.

That being said, no piece of archaeological media is perfect. The show does rely on inherent drama, showing Robinson and his team as enthusiastic fans of the mystery of the past:

“The enormous popularity of the series has a lot to do with two factors in particular. Firstly, *Time Team* thrives on the notion of archaeologists discovering a series of material clues gradually solving a hidden mystery, usually with the help of science. Secondly, *Time Team*'s appeal also relies on some very special personalities involved, particularly Tony Robinson who gets so reliably excited whenever new discoveries are made and has a very down-to-earth attitude” (Holtorf 41).

In order for any piece of media to be successful, the audience must enjoy at least a facet of the person who is delivering the information— think Carl Sagan and the *Cosmos*. Robinson's personality is more than enough to sustain interest but does not overpower the importance of the team's work, meaning his presence does not undercut the integrity of archaeology. *Time Team Britain*'s structure subtly betrays the integrity of an archaeologist's work, because although excavation of a site is completed within a certain frame, the methodology of *why* they're doing what they're doing is less important than the history they uncover. While the methods of ethical excavation practices are seen in the show, it is an aspect which is less focused on.

On The Site:

Working alongside Professors Foss and Schindler gave me an opportunity to observe archaeology through a scientifically ethical lens, meaning that they followed standard non-destructive excavation procedures before digging and carefully recovered and reconstructed fragments of artifacts. I dedicate a large portion of my film to these procedures because as Holtorf explains: “It causes professional archaeologists much headache when alternative, non-scientific accounts, approaches, or representations of their field and profession appear to master more public interest and command larger audiences than their own” (Holtorf 108). The

work of archaeologists is repetitive, intense, and heavily reliant on self-correcting documentation, and I explain how I captured those aspects further below. Inaccurate or incomplete representations of archaeology on television or in the movies are often more exciting, ostentatious, or disingenuous to the nature of true archaeological practices.

My film centers the process that archaeologists use to conduct research and attempts to protect the academic integrity of the work of Professor Schindler and Professor Foss. Because my project is, at its core, an archaeology film, I acknowledge the necessity to address what is expected of my project from an educational standpoint. According to Holtorf: "For many archaeologists the key issue in this context appears to be that they feel fundamentally misrepresented regarding the depiction of both the existing knowledge about the past and their own occupation. They would like to change the way archaeology is portrayed, to make it more accurate" (Holtorf 105). My film is confined to 20 minutes, because I do not have a crew of editors, and focuses mostly on the practices of excavating a dig site ethically. Essentially, I am attempting to generate interest in the process and supplement the history of our findings with it. I will insist on sustaining interest in the work without misrepresenting the TRAP research we collected, because as Holtorf points out: "Archaeologists sometimes feel helpless against misrepresentations in the mass media despite their best attempts at explaining to journalists why their sites are important and what their work is about" (Holtorf 108). Because Professor Schindler was my point of reference for this project, I was less likely to misrepresent the historical information that accompanied our methods to ethical excavation. I wanted to share the TRAP research in an ethical manner and misrepresenting the research would be compromising the integrity of the work.

My film does not glamorize or misrepresent the past, and seeks to engage in the process that archaeologists use to excavate a dig site. There are points where I get to display the TRAP findings from the site, and I did not intend to use any of the points touched upon above to generate any unethical representations of the project. It was important for me to understand one of the key principles of archaeology as a filmmaker, as Price suggests: “Archaeology is all about responsibility, about sharing the remarkable story and items that have survived from antiquity, about caring for the past and the future, and about protecting our heritage” (Price 499). The film had expectations before I had ever filmed anything, largely in part due to the expectations that archaeologists maintain for themselves and their profession.

When thinking about how I wanted to portray excavating a digsite, I captured what I believed to be visually important about the project: the consistency in routine. During initial filming (when the group traveled to different cities in Italy), I found myself constantly rethinking what I wanted the film to look like despite maintaining an overarching idea of capturing as much footage as possible. Because of this factor, as corny as this cliché may sound, I tried to paint a picture through every shot that was not an interview. As Pepe suggests: “Acquiring illustrative B-roll footage is a mainstay of documentary filmmaking” (Pepe 106). How does one acquire illustrative B-Roll? For most shots, my technique was to use the ‘rule of thirds’ in camerawork, or the idea of splitting the camera image into thirds (both horizontal and vertical thirds) and capturing the object of the shot on the borders between each third. I felt adhering to this technique served me best because in addition to having dynamic composition with each shot, it rings similar to how an archaeological dig site is set up. Think of a grid split into nine squares; my goal was to capture the object of the shot on the lines that divide each square. For still shots, I would place the object of the shot directly on the lines of the imaginary squares and film for

approximately ten seconds. I chose to film for ten seconds for most B-Roll, because even if I only needed five seconds for a particular shot, my instincts told me it was better to have more than I need and have to discard some footage than not have enough footage and ultimately have to discard a highlight of the project. For tracking shots, my goal was to keep the object within those thirds as the object was moving. For example, near the end of the film, students were gathered near the tools and supply shed after they'd discovered the bomb, and I would switch the camera onto those who were speaking, keeping the rule of thirds in mind. Most of the filming was B-Roll of the group working on the site because the thought I had in mind was to capture detailed images of the physical labor, in addition to students taking field notes in their trench journals. These images are what I felt was most representative of what digging an archaeological site looks like, which as I have mentioned, was part of the primary focus of filming.

During filming, I had to think like an editor and the question I would ask myself most is “what about this shot is interesting” followed by “how can I best capture that”; at the time of filming, I felt that a healthy variety between hand-held and tripod shots would allow me room to experiment in the editing room, and it did. As I have mentioned above, the idea for this project changed several times in the editing process because of how much time I had and what I could actually manage, but I recorded roughly six hours of footage. To me, the best shots in the film are the ones captured on a tripod. I liked these shots the most because I focused more on the collective picture rather than the action of the shot. It was very important to have hand-held action shots in this film, but I wanted the shots captured on a tripod to encapsulate the broader progress as the dig site was being excavated. Pepe describes the necessity of the tripod here: “You may already use a tripod for some of your still photography documentation. Good. If not, go out and buy a quality tripod, one that is sturdy but not too heavy to carry around in the field. It

will be money well spent” (Pepe 117). I used the tripod every day I filmed in some capacity to capture our travels off-site, which served as good practice before completely covering the group’s collective digging progress. The reason I love the tripod shots is because it allowed me to think like a photographer instead of a filmmaker; I could paint the picture of the dig site the way I saw it. In every hand-held shot, there is a natural shake— even the best surgeon in the world wouldn’t be able to keep the camera completely still the way a tripod could.

Collecting the footage was not an issue *per se*, but collecting the right kind of footage was my focus. I would ask for advice about what shots would represent the dig site best from both Professors Schindler and Foss: “The job of the archaeologist who is an integral part of a collaborative archaeology documentary filmmaking team is to advise the director on content, interviews, and what B-roll and other images best tell the documentary story so that it is compelling and truthful” (Pepe 108). Professor Schindler was an integral part to collecting all of the footage because she would observe an aspect of the dig that I would not have noticed, such as on the first day when the giant vehicles were removing dirt for the dig. Having someone knowledgeable about the ins and outs of excavating a site was essential, otherwise I probably would not have been able to capture the full process in action. Professor Foss also played an instrumental role in filming, but instead of behind the scenes help, he would often take the lead and show the group the proper way to do things, such as safely swinging a pickaxe. I noticed throughout the course of filming that my fatigue would factor into the quality of the shots. It was frustrating to review some shots that I thought were good, but ultimately were disposable. Pepe describes techniques to better shoot B-Roll here: “...learn not to jerk your video camera as you move it, as too much motion ruins the quality of your video. Do not pan quickly from one subject to the next. It is probably best that you be stationary when videotaping, and keep your shot to

about 15–20 seconds of stationary B-roll. Likewise, when zooming your camera shot, go slow” (Pepe 118). During the assembly cut, which will be discussed further below, I realized how rough some of the shots were when I first started shooting that day. As the day went on and the group progressed with digging, the shots became more detailed and more intentional. This was due to the fact that we were working early in the morning on digging days, and the Italians served their coffee in minimal proportions compared to the United States, so it took a minute to wake up. Most of the footage that I discarded during the assembly cut was described by Pepe perfectly.

There were certain elements of the dig that I knew I was going to capture, so I created an outline to help guide me through the process. It was not well put-together, nor was it designed to be. I just wanted a point of reference for the kinds of shots I wanted, and that document, like Pepe describes here, was something I kept coming back to: “The shooting script describes the parts of the documentary that the crew intends to tell. It informs the documentary team which people need to be interviewed, what B-roll has to be shot, and so on. Sometimes the shooting script is nothing more than an outline, essentially a two-column format.--” (Pepe 54). There were no daily plans, but after arriving on site, I developed patterns of recording B-Roll of students digging over each day and interviewing one student named Aidan Mooney. He was in my trench digging group, and agreed to let me ask him questions at the end of some days. One issue I ran into over the course of filming was sticking to the original shooting script on a day-to-day basis, especially considering the professors were forced to alter the schedule of the research campaign due to waiting on the digging permit. Our schedule was originally intermixed with digging/classroom days and travel days (intended to supplement the classroom days). Because of the lack of the permit, the travel and classroom days were all pushed towards the first three weeks of the project and the digging days were delayed until the third week.

I knew once we were on the dig site, I wanted to collect interviews from two or three students and Professor Schindler specifically, because both perspectives offered their own benefits. Although I could have interviewed more students, I decided to minimize the number of voices because I believed the two students I interviewed and Professor Schindler's insights were the most beneficial to the film. With Professor Schindler, major discoveries, like the gemstone found on the first day, required further historical explanation, so her insights were needed. With the students, their perspectives are beneficial because their interviews are all about their progress in digging, which supplements the B-Roll. I would not say I abandoned my original shooting script, but I was improvising as we went along. Cataloging the footage was easy at first because my driving idea at the time of digging was to tell the story of the research project chronologically.

In terms of collecting the interviews, as previously mentioned, I already knew that I wanted only three to four people from the group, one of which included Professor Schindler. The questions I asked the interviewees questions that pertained to what was happening at the dig site that particular day. I forgot to ask one participant, Aiden, to remove his sunglasses, so in the reflection of his shades, there I am standing in front of him with the camera. However, this edit was addressed in post-production. Another edit I made in post-production was transcribing the audio from the interviews themselves: "Regardless of what approach to logging is followed, next the interviews need to be transcribed—that is, a team member listens to the interviews and makes a written copy of exactly what was said. Nowadays this can be accomplished by computer transcription" (Pepe 109). I used websites to transcribe all of the interviews, but this almost felt unnecessary because I knew I was going to narrate the film at the time I collected the interviews.

This was an easy decision to make because transcribing interviews myself would have been more time-consuming and tedious, but absolutely necessary.

I discovered the audio issues with the footage, both with the interviews and the B-Roll during the rough cut, which will be explained further below. In terms of the audio quality of the interviews, I had to cut my losses and experiment with it because the information I received from all of the interviews was important. These two factors were what led me to narrating the film myself, which as Pepe describes, is a tremendous amount of responsibility: “Without great narration, the production can seem choppy, lacking in continuity, and emotionally flat. A powerful narration depends on both a compelling voice and a well-crafted, interesting narration text. Together they draw the audience into the story, enhancing the viewing experience” (Pepe 113). I realize that the narration must have an entertaining component, and my point of interest is humor. This means I am able to wield another tool that the Media Fellows program enabled me to sharpen over my four years at DePauw. And ultimately, deciding what footage to use was easy once I decided to run with that direction. Pepe once again describes my approach to completing the film: “...discard bad footage and keep and log only video clips of interviews and B-roll that are deemed useful for possible inclusion into the documentary” (Pepe 109). After deciding that narration could cover for subpar audio quality from the best shots and after deciding my voice was going to be the one guiding the audience through the film, the film became much easier to envision from my artistic standpoint. The narration I provide is intended to be humorous but doesn’t betray the integrity of the process of ethically excavating an archaeological dig site.

Reflections:

I created a film because it allowed me to combine my Media Fellows expertise with Professor Schindler’s professional research. My goals of this project were not to raise any stakes

deliberately as to avoid any unnecessary drama or expectations yet educate an audience about excavating a dig site and telling the story of my chapter in the larger project. I believed my choice to create the film was my best option because writing a book, an online article, or publishing a podcast would not allow me to fully capture how much I've learned from the Media Fellows program. My approach as a filmmaker was to participate as a student of archaeology and to film the practices of ethically excavating a dig site as they were happening. I would say the most difficult aspect of this project was balancing being a student of an archaeological dig site and a filmmaker of an archaeological documentary. I had never taken a Classical Studies course, nor did I have a background in archaeology, so managing new information was at times difficult. In addition to that, I had never before filmed any project longer than twenty minutes.

When we were in Italy, although each day brought a certain anticipation and excitement, we worked diligently and according to standards in the name of our research. Archaeologists carefully and critically analyze evidence to then apply historical context to their research. Protecting the past is crucial to this project, even if the public seems to care more about the conclusions of the research, as Holtorf writes: "There is very little appreciation in popular culture of the fact that archaeologists can tell us in some detail what specifically went on in the past and far more emphasis is given to how they arrive at any specific insight, notably through digging up artifacts and pieces together various kinds of available evidence" (Holtorf 131). This fact is rather underappreciated in the context of archaeology in the media, because examples of this are few and far between. Had I more time to generate a longer film, I would attempt to emphasize my professors' work and their ability to identify the specificities of history through careful and practiced processes. For example, they were able to quickly piece together the precise moment in time in which the WWII mortar shell (that decisively concluded our research campaign) landed

near our site, and unfortunately, that is not highlighted in the film. I do not intend to focus on the mortar shell as an incredible discovery, rather as an inconvenience to the larger research campaign and a hindrance to further excavation, because we did not realize it was there until five weeks into the six week process.

From this experience, I derived three main similarities between the process of ethically excavating a dig site and filming a documentary about archaeology. The biggest similarity between the two professions is the painstaking attention to detail. Archaeologists have to know how to calculate GPS coordinates correctly, how to properly set a trench edge, how to draw the site and its findings adequately, how to sweep and clean the areas after someone has pickaxed, how to identify each discovered artifact, and how to communicate their findings with the public. Filmmakers are constantly checking angles, using the rule of thirds (which will be explained below), making split-decisions on what shots would best portray the activity in frame, and engaging with the material both as a participant of the dig site and a filmmaker. This connection is most notable, because I found the more I paid attention to what I was filming, the more I was paying attention to the material itself. I was learning more knowledge about what we were digging and figuring out how to capture that information in the most effective way possible.

Another major similarity between filmmaking and archaeology is the lack of predictability, followed swiftly by immediate adjustments. Before arriving in Italy, I created a base shooting schedule to give me an idea of what I wanted to capture on film. When I arrived, my shooting schedule did not work with the schedule of the project, and I had to alter my daily shooting routine. In terms of discovery, we uncovered a kiln in Alpha trench in addition to Roman artifacts, which were found all over the site. The group began working to understand where the entrance of the kiln was, what exactly it was used for, and when it was used—Medieval

times. That discovery accompanied a project-ending discovery of the WWII mortar shell. What that means is that within the relatively small time frame the group was actually on site, we discovered artifacts from three different points in history in the same spot, which I found remarkable. Filming was unpredictable in the sense that each day brought another stage of digging the site, so capturing every new and exciting moment was unpredictable; however, since I was able to complete the film, one can notice how I was able to make the adjustments needed to capture the important moments of the project. were found in eliminating footage from the final cut, reducing the film from an hour down to twenty minutes, modifying the script after a second draft of the film was completed, and . Although, doing that sometimes meant sacrificing part of my role as a participant of the dig site, and not the filmmaker.

The last categorical similarity between archaeology and filmmaking as concepts is how processual both professions are. Archaeologists use particular methods to properly excavate a dig site in order to obtain relevant information about the past, and if those methods are compromised, the research is inherently compromised as well. When I didn't follow my protocol with each shot, the camera would be shaky, the lens wouldn't be focused on what I wanted, and the quality of the shot would suffer, ultimately meaning that I lost a moment in the excavation process that I could have filmed and used in the editing room. Every single detail matters on a dig site, from the trench lines to the drawings, and every single detail of each shot matters as well.

Primarily focusing on the process of ethically excavating a dig site, in my opinion, was a risky creative choice, because when people typically watch archaeology in the media, the content is centered more around the discoveries and the history. However, as a filmmaker, if I do not believe the project can reach its potential, the film will reflect that, and I believe what this film

needed was humor. Recording comedic narration was my way of engaging with my audience because I have a background in comedic education. I participated in the Second City Comedy Studies Training Program and felt equipped to deliver an educational message through humor. It acts as my vessel of communication to my audience, who I assume will not be very large at this particular point in time in my life. Although comedy is an unconventional approach to portraying archaeology in media form, Holtorf reflects on standing behind one's work: "Archaeologists will only be able to use the enormous appeal of their own brand if they themselves stand behind it and embrace its various connotations in their work" (Holtorf 134). Holtorf probably did not imagine a student finding comedy in the process of excavating to be part of his 'various connotations', but I believe that I can portray these methods without betraying their essences. Because I participated in an archaeological dig, I feel confident enough to say that I have performed the duties of an archaeologist. I performed the duties of an archaeologist in addition to being a filmmaker, I feel confident in my ability to adequately express the importance of ethical archaeological practices. In addition to this, whether or not I can reach a larger audience with this film, I feel confident in my ability to put together an entertaining film.

Before I filmed anything, I knew I would publish this for both my future creative endeavors and for archaeologists and those interested in archaeology (my intended audience). The publication of this film is especially important because as Price notes, one of the principles of archaeology is the presentation of research: "Archaeologists have a duty to themselves and to the public to protect and preserve the past and to share their knowledge of that past" (Price 499). My film acts as an opportunity to present how archaeological research is conducted in addition to presenting the research too. The film format, however, comes with a very particular contingency. Because this project is a film, the information I present from the TRAP research is inherently

one-way, meaning the historical accuracy of the information being presented is ultimately filtered through me, which unintentionally creates bias. This presents an issue because eliminating interaction between the research and the general public places all the responsibility of content on the creator of the film, which is me, and I have no previous experience in either the field of archaeology or documentary filmmaking. I believed my role in the film itself was also a participant, as the biggest part of my approach in this film was to involve myself in the process of excavating a dig site. In retrospect, I do not know if this was the best approach, but at the time of filming, I believed it was best to participate fully if I was to capture the best footage.

Historical accuracy is paramount in projects like these, as poor representations of archaeology in the media have led to misconceptions surrounding the field itself. One added benefit of presenting the research in film form is that I have the creative liberty to package the information in an entertaining format. Unfortunately, the film itself was reduced to focus on the process of ethically excavating an archaeological dig site and parts of the research itself, and I eliminated footage of our travels to other parts of Italy and other human aspects of the project, such as how the group was feeling and how I was feeling. These elements still show up in the final product, but I leaned more into the process of excavating a site and what the daily process was like; even though the human aspects are not a focal point, I still felt that they were important to include because those elements ground the film in reality and create trust between the audience and me, the creator.

Initially, the film was going to be an hour in length and would feature more than just the process of properly and ethically excavating an archaeological site. I wanted to explore the history we learned about the area more in-depth and how it contributed to our findings on the dig site. I wanted to show where in Italy the group had traveled and how that coupled well with

what we learned in the classroom. I also wanted to dive into the dynamics of the group itself and what was unique about the people within the group. However, despite having what I considered to be a solid structure at the genesis of filming, the finished project turned out to be no longer than twenty minutes. I had footage of the travels, the class, other parts of Castiglione del Lago, and more of the dig site, but due to time constraints, I focused on the dig. Had I had more time in the editing room, I would have morphed the film into either a narrative about the entirety of the research project (which would've included the group dynamics mentioned above), or a product similar to the example episode of *Time Team Britain* I analyzed above. I was the sole editor, director, and producer of the film, and I changed the direction of the film a few times both while filming and throughout the course of editing the footage in the fall; some ideas were going to mix the history of Castiglione del Lago with the dig, include travel footage from when the group took educational detours to other Italian cities, and try to create an hour-long film. I eventually decided that the process of ethically excavating a dig site would be the best basis from which to build.

Before we arrived in Italy, I packed an HD digital video camcorder, a tripod, an iPhone, an iPhone microphone, and a 60 mb memory card, and once I arrived, I came to discover that the iPhone microphone did not function properly. My personal iPhone had damage to its audio settings, so that microphone did not suffice either. I had brought the camcorder as a backup device because I wanted to film everything on the iPhone and edit the footage as I collected it. I didn't have any problems managing the camcorder, as my Media Fellows training prepared me for what I should be looking for and how to properly use the device. Had I brought a portable microphone with the camcorder, I would've included more personal testimonies from other members of the group than just those seen in the final cut of the film. Due to the lack of a

properly working microphone, my biggest challenge in filming was sound. The microphone installed in the camcorder worked well, but the quality of the audio was dependent on the wind and other surround sounds. The differences in sound quality between footage with a microphone and without a microphone are noticeable and can reduce the entertainment quality of the film itself. Pepe describes the issue of camera audio quality here: “Today’s consumer digital video camcorders are characterized by low price, simplicity of use, and portability... However, the audio recording capability of these devices is not up to professional standards, as too much ambient sound is inadvertently captured” (Pepe 38-39). In virtually every interview seen in the film some type of ambient noise is captured in the background, whether it be the loud construction vehicles at the beginning of the dig or the wind or my own fumbling with the camera. As an amateur filmmaker, managing this dilemma was more difficult than I imagined. At times, I would cover the camera’s microphone to redirect where the camera would capture noise, but this method never worked and oftentimes ruined a shot. I did my best to minimize surround sound, but ultimately because of the poor audio quality, I resorted to narrating the film and using ambient noise only when I’m not speaking.

After returning from Italy, I was introduced to James Olsen, newly appointed director of the Pulliam Center of the Contemporary Media. The PCCM is where I learned everything necessary for making this documentary, and I had not met him before. He’s an experienced documentary filmmaker with credits in HBO productions who helped me think about the film through a deeper narrative lens. He recommended “Sherman’s March: A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love In the South During an Era of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation,” which, very briefly, is an excellent example of a filmmaker using self-narration to explore broader topics. The element of self-narration, along with the poor audio quality of the footage, is

what shapes the overall tone of the film. According to Pepe, there are specific phases of completing the final product: “Steps in the Postproduction Phase : 1) Assembly cut 2) Rough cut 3) Narration 4) Music 5) Fine Cut 6) Finishing the documentary” (Pepe 135). These steps directly mirror my process of finalizing the film. The assembly cut was merely collecting the footage and cutting bad shots. Bad shots may include botched angles, lots of surround sound, lots of camera movement, or external distracting factors. This was probably the easiest phase in the post-production process because it was simply eliminating waste.

When I arrived at the rough cut, that’s when knowing I was going to narrate the film was essential; no matter what I thought of the audio quality of the best shots, I could simply take the surrounding sound out and instead insert my voice. Pepe describes the rough cut as: “a polishing of the assembly cut so that the documentary begins to look a bit more like the final production. Tough decisions need to be made here so that the production is not overloaded with material. You have undoubtedly heard the expression “less is better.” (Pepe 136). In terms of limiting the scope of the film, this was the most difficult part of post-production, because I made the decision to solely focus on the process of ethically excavating an archaeological dig site and the research we gathered instead of the entirety of the research project as a larger narrative. No footage from the travels nor the classes the group took are seen in the film, nor the night life of the students and other aspects like that. In retrospect, attempting to consolidate the travels and classes would not have done those parts of the research project justice, as the primary focus of the film even at its conception was the dig site anyways. Even in late fall, I was still considering the hour-long approach because I was attached to the idea of including the travels because I felt the inclusion would’ve added more context to what the group was anticipating to excavate. However, my goal

was to show ethical archaeological practices, and I believe the B-Roll footage I collected from the dig site displayed those practices.

Part of creating this film was learning how to recreate the highlights of the project. When I was thinking how to portray the ethical steps of an archaeological dig, I felt the best approach to relaying these steps was to show what happened on the project chronologically. For me, this made post-production easier, because I could explain the importance of preliminary research of the area in the museum, I could explain the importance of setting up the GPS coordinates correctly, and I could show the daily routines of archaeologists at dig sites, something that does not happen much in media portraying archaeology. It was as if I could take the audience on a chronological journey of the project while remaining educational. As each day progressed, I felt like I was illustrating a narrative about the dig site while also explaining the importance of the process of ethically excavating a dig site.

Generating more intrigue out of the highlights of the project was not my intention, mainly because I felt the project's highlights were intriguing as I experienced them in real time. Holtorf describes the sensation I felt here: "Archaeology provides memorable experiences which fascinate many people... Many of these experiences, stories and engagements draw on the practices of doing archaeology in the present: excavating ancient remains, discovering "treasures", rescuing archaeological sites and investigating our origins with the help of modern technology loom large" (Holtorf 10). I did not want to misrepresent the project's integrity, nor create a false sense of wonder. What I wanted to relay about archaeology in this film was how interesting it can be without overdramatizing the history of the findings or deliberately raising any stakes to heighten the emotion. Although I touch on what the group discovered at the site, it is not the primary focus of the film, because I believed I could portray the process of archaeology

in an interesting and entertaining fashion without resorting to the tactics previously mentioned.

Holtorf here describes how the history unveiled by archaeologists makes audiences feel:

“...archaeology can make people enjoy themselves and satisfy some of their innermost wishes and desires. Each archaeological company or institution is thus not in the business of understanding the past but of enhancing people’s lives through adventures, mysteries, revelations and offering possibilities to care” (Holtorf 133-34). I do not disagree entirely about his point about the intrigue of the past, but my film is intended to offer a different lens; I lean into the archaeological process instead of the historical findings.

Before adding narration, I forged a very rough 25 minute cut because I wanted to see what the film looked like without narration, and specifically where I felt the visuals lacked. After seeing what all nine days looked like in order, I began writing the script and specifically conveyed these points about the process of performing ethical archaeological evidence: Formulation, Collecting and Recording the Evidence, and Processing and Analyzing. I wrote the script across each day and explained what we were doing on the site and why what we were doing was important. The script was the last part of the project for a reason, as Pepe here describes: “Somewhere in post production, the final narration (also called “voiceover”) is recorded. The director may wait until all the kinks in the rough cut have been worked out before getting the narrator to record narration and add that track into the production.” (Pepe 137). Being both the director and the narrator, I wanted to wait until I was positive that the footage in the rough cut was sufficient. For example, on Day One, I talked about geographical surveys and why they’re important in the archaeological process, then used footage of Professor Foss setting the GPS near the dig site to reiterate what I was talking about. As I wrote the script, I ended up cutting five minutes from the first draft because I believed the pace of the film should be fast,

because my touch as a director was adding a comedic element, and in my experience, comedy works best with a quickened pace. Taking a comedic approach to a film about archaeology is certainly unorthodox in comparison to other forms of archaeology in the media, as has been explained above.

My analysis of archaeology in the media led me to the directorial decision of taking a comedic approach. Education has been the main focus since the beginning, and I believed that using subtle techniques to raise the stakes of the film would misrepresent my interpretation of the archaeological project. I wanted to avoid the pitfall of overdramatizing the history of what we learned from the site, and in general, I did not want to generate a false sense of intrigue about the process of ethical excavation practices. Excavating a site is long, tedious, monotonous, and physically exhausting. However, I could identify humorous moments in the moments of exhaustion because of my background in comedy. For example, the way Professor Foss explained how to use a pickaxe properly was funny, because I also filmed students using the pickaxe improperly. As dry as that reads on paper, that sequence makes a lot of sense in the context of my film.

Most of the comedy comes from the narration, because my goal when I was filming was to maintain an academic approach. I wrote jokes in the script because although the footage from day to day was inherently different, I was capturing similar B-Roll, specifically of students digging on the site and documenting their progress. After I had included the necessary educational components into the script, I then used the script as an opportunity to be entertaining. That is not to say I did not capture comedic moments on the site. For example, Professor Foss explained why acquiring the correct GPS coordinates from the satellite was important to the dig site, and then I captured a moment where our calculations were incorrect. The awkwardness of

the moment may not have been funny in the moment, but in the editing room, the situation was funny. It was an organic comedic moment that I believed did not need my voice. One of the discrepancies of taking a comedic approach to this film is how it may be perceived academically. Due to the nature of comedic films, the stakes are usually much lower and less consequential, unlike the project itself. A mockumentary style would not have worked for this particular project, so the comedy must come from my perspective as the narrator. My intention as the narrator is to eliminate distance and be relatable through jokes, as that is who I am as a person. I would be remiss, however, not to reiterate that my intention, first and foremost, has been to create an educational film about the steps to ethically dig an archaeological dig site.

As a filmmaker, I learned the need for a crew. It is impossible to create a film by myself, especially when I am not familiar with the subject material. Relying on a strict production schedule, both filming and editing, was not feasible because creating a film is not like writing an academic paper. Sometimes, I would be frustrated in the editing room because I had to figure out the direction of my film while I was editing it, and I could not always clearly define what the direction actually was. I had colliding creative ideas, because I wanted to create a film around the full scope of the project instead of just the dig site. It was frustrating to consolidate my ideas, to eliminate footage, to alter the direction of the film, to think and rethink my intention for this film, and to have to settle for a project that I believe could have been better. I believe in the film and what I am trying to accomplish, but I also believe that with a crew, this project could have been more successfully executed.

I also learned that films are never made in filming, rather in editing. And in editing, I learned that I need to have a very clear and concise direction that I want to approach the film with. I never felt like I had a clear direction until I actually sat down and tried to create the movie

from scratch. I felt like I had no idea what I was doing or if I was doing something correctly or incorrectly in terms of representing archaeology on film, and that sometimes took me away from the project. At times, I did not feel comfortable with the material and felt removed from it, which led to me feeling discouraged in the process of creating the film. And the film that I submitted at the time of submission was not the one I wanted to submit.

However, I am grateful for the experience of having accompanied Professor Schindler and Foss and gone outside of my comfort zone to achieve something I did not know I could. Even if I made a terrible film, I learned about the process of filmmaking and will apply it to my future endeavors. And the experience of excavating a dig site was truly unique, as I never imagined I would ever participate, let alone understand it. Although I have a due date on this film, I do not feel this process is complete, therefore I do not feel that this thesis is entirely complete, either. As sole creator, director, and producer, I reserve the right to modify the film after submission, and I do not have to release the film until I am satisfied with it.

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