

Review of: Valdez-Tullett, J. (2019). Design and Connectivity: The Case of Atlantic Rock Art. (BAR Internat. Series, 2932). Oxford: BAR. 286 pages, 172 figures (31 in colour), 61 graphs (39 in colour). Supplemental material online (figures and graphs). ISBN 9781407316628.

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This book review is somewhat atypical to others I have written in the past as it encompasses two, linked, critical assessments. Primarily, this is a review of Joana Valdez-Tullett recent work *Design and Connectivity: The Case of Atlantic Rock Art*. Secondly, this is a response to a review of this work that appeared recently in this journal (COLSON, 2020). I write this review as someone who studied archaeology in Ireland, and whose professional experience is largely derived from working in Britain; formerly in the commercial archaeology sector, and laterally for a governmental body in England.

For most archaeological periods, the presence of artistic expression is a vital tool for understanding the peoples and cultures one wishes to study. For the Palaeolithic new finds of rock art can become major academic events, as well as popular news stories (BELLO ET AL., 2020). Cave paintings and carved expression from this period present a key source of academic research (DAVID & MC-NIVEN, 2019), as well as popular interest (for example Werner Herzog's 2010 documentary *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*). From the Iron Age onwards, archaeological material increasingly fits within pan-European historical schemes, allowing research and interpretation opportunities not available to deeper prehistory. From the beginning of the historic periods (certainly in England) a conceptual divide means one may encounter 'rock carvings' in the Roman and medieval periods, but not 'rock art' in the sense it is meant for prehistory (one would not refer to a Norman cathedral as being decorated with 'rock art' for example). Compared to the proceeding and preceding periods it is incongruous how little discussion of Neolithic/Bronze Age carved rock expression (largely from open air sites) seems to be integrated into discussions of British prehistory generally; see for example the extent of its treatment in academic and popular works such as Pollard (2008) and Cunliffe (2012).

In terms of Neolithic/Bronze Age rock art and public perception, I have found many members of the public surprised to learn of the existence of prehistoric rock art in England. Arguably, rock art has failed to be integrated into the public ima-

gination in England in the same manner it can be seen in, for example, Ireland. As an example, "Kerbstone 1" from the burial mound at Newgrange, Ireland, is probably more familiar to the average English archaeological enthusiast than English rock art motifs at sites such as Fylingdales, Weetwood Moor and Chatton. This may be largely due to the manner in which Irish rock art symbolism (particularly the interlinking spiral) has been embraced as symbolic of Ireland via official government use, tourist interactions and commercial advertising – the Holy Trinity of archaeological acceptance.

From a heritage management point of view the situation is little better. Equal management of such a huge resource may be impossible. The suite of management options that can be proposed for most other archaeological remains simply cannot be applied universally here. Best practice means rock art panels cannot be recut, or repointed, they cannot be coated with protective paints, and their burial is counterproductive to their public presentation, and inefficient in terms of management budgets (and likely damaging). In terms of its academic study and heritage management, open air rock art presents a uniquely challenging problem. To some in the profession to study Neolithic/Bronze Age open air rock art seems like a slight step up from studying ley lines.

In this context, research that advances the integration of Neolithic/Bronze Age rock art into wider debates in prehistory is to be welcomed; and this is where Joana Valdez-Tullett's work sits.

Design and Connectivity: The Case of Atlantic Rock Art is volume 1 in a new series by British Archaeological Reports Publishing on the 'Archaeology of Prehistoric Art'. It is derived from Valdez-Tullett's PhD work, supervised at the University of Southampton, completed in 2017. The volume consists of 262 pages, as well as a series of online supporting material. It is illustrated throughout in colour and black and white.

The book uses as its foundation the concept of "Atlantic Rock Art"; a term probably most familiar to archaeologists via the work of Richard Bradley (particularly his 1997 work *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe: Signing the Land*; though the term owes its origins to MacWhites earlier work). Valdez-Tullett is clear in this throughout the work (p. 15-17); using the concept popularised by Bradley, but developing it into regions, and using techniques, not previously used at this scale. In this she is one of a number of rock art researchers who have been pushing forward the agenda of academic rock art research in Britain and Ireland

over the last number of years (O'CONNOR, 2006; BARNETT & SHARPE, 2010; SHARPE, 2012). I now know this agenda has also been advancing in Spain and Portugal, via researchers who are introduced to me for the first time in this work.

The first two chapters contextualise the study and outline the concept of Atlantic Rock Art as an archaeological term. In chapter 3 Valdez-Tullett sets out her five case studies (The Machars, Scotland; Ilkley Moor, England; Iveragh Peninsula, Ireland; Barbanza Peninsula, Spain; and Monte Faro, Portugal). This is probably one of the key strengths of the work as by treating Atlantic Rock Art with a spread of case studies across international lines the reader has both the individual case studies to consider, as well as the overall approach at a macro-level. The integration of the Portuguese case study will be of particular interest to Atlantic Rock Art researchers. This brings in material from the Iberian Peninsula that would previously have been represented with limited reference to the rock art of Galicia only. In this Valdez-Tullett acknowledges the survey work of Lara Bacelar Alves and Mário Reis in northern Portugal.

Chapter 4 presents a hypothesis of cultural transition in the context of the spread of rock art. For such a short chapter, there is much to digest here. The main purpose is for Valdez-Tullett to lay out the perspective from which she approached the concept of Atlantic Rock Art as an archaeological umbrella term for her study area. Chapter 5 sets out the intellectual justification for how the rock art is approached; challenging the levels of both homogeneity or heterogeneity when considering Atlantic Rock Art as an archaeological concept.

Chapter 6 is presented rather like a methods manual for the study; setting out the scales of research, survey methods, fieldwork, recording, and documentation. I was particularly interested here in the discussion of the quality of the pre-existing survey information for the regions covered. This includes some of the problems encountered during the course of the study – with some cautionary tales for the differing quality of survey data available in the different case study zones (p. 62-63). Chapter 7 and 8 synthesise the work of the thesis and contextualise it within wider rock art studies in the regions covered by the research. In a sense chapter 7 reads like the answer to the issues raised in chapter 4. I was particularly interested in the perspective that far from being displayed on the landscape, Atlantic Rock Art was in many ways hidden; though present on large, open rock panels, these were not in areas, or on rock faces, that were suitable for conspicuous display (p. 154-55).

In a series of appendixes Valdez-Tullett outlines the locations and bibliographic references for all her sites, the datasets, and their variables used in the statistical analysis. The standout appendixes for me are Appendix 2 and 3. Appendix 2 is a categorisation setting out, with outline drawings, over 160 motifs found in Atlantic Rock Art. This is the type of thing I expect to see photocopied, laminated and carried on every academic survey, student fieldtrip, and community recording project for the foreseeable future. There should be no ambiguity then over what constitutes a “*cup-mark between rings*” and a “*cup-mark in ring gap*”. Appendix 3 lists the variables used in the different approaches to the Presence/Absence Matrix and Network Analysis. This is set out clearly in a series of tables in a manner that could so easily be applied to comparable studies, or used in future reassessment of this work.

I was advised to read this book as it was described as contemporary example of how an effective, economical, and transferable rock art project could be devised and employed. In this, the book did not disappoint. There is much to take away from this study in terms of heritage management considerations. In particular, the use of RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging), and photogrammetry as a recording method across the five regions shows how useful this tool can be both as a recording, and as an interpretative tool (p. 67-69). For many years it has felt as if laser scanning has been presented as the recording panacea for rock art. Laser scanning certainly has its place, but Valdez-Tullett has presented a useful argument in favour of using more easily employed techniques that utilise free to use software in their processing, and which are more easily archived than raw laser scan data. There are also useful consideration of where some of these techniques also let her down when surveying in some regions (p. 68).

In terms of criticism, there are a few things I would like to see addressed. The lack of a study area in France is addressed briefly in the work (p. 9), but I would like to have seen this addressed in a bit more detail (though the work of Bradly [1997] has also dealt with the slightly different nature of the French evidence).

From a production point of view, I appreciate that colour photography brings with it a range of production costs, however, I was disappointed to see that the downloadable files were also in black and white. The photographs are high quality throughout, but would have made a strong impression if rendered in colour even in the downloadable files.

I'm not sure if I completely embrace all the conclusions of Valdez-Tullett (it feels like I will need to return to the work after a period of reflection), but should anybody wish to pursue this further she has presented her datasets for judgement, and makes no grand claims to having "solved" the issue of Atlantic Rock Art. It is for other dedicated Atlantic Rock Art researchers to pick up where she has left off (much as she picked up issues not addressed by Bradley).

Who would benefit most from this work? The book is to be recommended for anyone considering undertaking survey work in multiple regions, providing a clear example of how to undertake an open-air rock art survey using accessible technical contemporary digital methods. For those new to Atlantic Rock Art studies, or coming back to them after earlier study as I was, chapters 1-2 introduce the topic clearly. For those who would want to undertake a project of their own chapter 3 sets out a good example of how this might be approached, while chapter 6 sets out the technical elements of a survey. For the dedicated rock art researcher the book brings together concepts and regions often not treated together on an equal footing. Chapters 7 and 8 synthesise the study, and address the questions raised by the author. In an era when it seems archaeology is too often led by studies utilising isotopic analysis, and ancient DNA studies, Valdez-Tullett's work raises many questions as to the nature and extent of cultural transmission that simply cannot be addressed (or are not being addressed) by the current in-vogue technique of the "Third Scientific Revolution" (KRISTIANSEN, 2014). These are not merely questions for rock art researchers, but key issues for the Neolithic and Bronze Age of the Atlantic fringe.

It is the prerogative of the book reviewer to consider who the book is aimed at, what the author sets out to do, and whether they have achieved this by the end of the book. A book about Atlantic Rock Art is primarily aimed at those with an interest in rock art (student/academic/professional). Secondary to this, it is aimed at those with an interest in the prehistory of Western Europe. Finally, a book of this nature is less likely to be of interest to those outside these two categories. This brings me on to the previous review of this work.

I would start by setting out clearly that the book is a BAR. This publication format has been the workhouse of British archaeological publishing for almost 50 years, and almost as long for their international series. The blue and red covers are iconic, and visiting the BAR stand at a conference is always a delightful mix of wondering

how on earth someone could write a whole publication on an obscure topic, while picking up a publication that seems to be exactly the study you have wanted to see for years. In short, if you see a BAR that touches on your period of interest, geographic focus, or professional background you will probably want to read it. They are the ideal format for publishing PhD research, conference proceedings, and excavations that would otherwise remain unpublished, or cut into a series of disparate journal papers. The publication of accessible datasets is one of the main advantages of this approach. Thus, for this publication the serious rock art researcher is treated to over 70 pages of technical appendixes that is unlikely to be published in another hardcopy format. For anyone interested in seriously pursuing Atlantic Rock Art the 22 page bibliography is likely to be the most up-to-date one for the whole of the area covered by Atlantic Rock Art currently in print.

What I cannot accept in a review is the misrepresentation of the work of another in a manner which opens the author to unjustified ridicule and might divert scholars away from consideration of reading of the work. It is into this category that Colson's review falls (COLSON, 2020). I have neither the time nor the inclination to go through everything that I disagree with in Colson's treatment of this publication. I will stick to the key issues.

Firstly, Colson is extremely selective in terms of their quotations from Valdez-Tullett; using excerpts from the middle of sentences, and largely out of context. I tried to chase down as many of these as I could (the referencing is not always correct), and without exception where a quotation from the book is used to cast aspersions on Valdez-Tullett, it is taken out of context. The reviewer rather scornfully posits; "One quickly gains a strong impression that Valdez-Tullett sees her study as the key work which establishes an Atlantic tradition of petroglyphs". Nothing could be further from the truth. At all times Valdez-Tullett is clear in her intellectual debt to Bradley (and others), and claims neither to reinvent, nor overthrow the basic tenants of the term. Equally, the claim that Valdez-Tullett implies that the study of rock art is separate from archaeology is simply not true based on the citation in the review. Valdez-Tullett is clear that rock art was slow to take its place at the centre of modern academic archaeology, and often limited to a small number of local (and very dedicated) regional amateurs, until developments within post-Processual archaeology developed (p. 11-24). The belief that, "According to Valdez-Tullett archaeo-

logical theories are linear developments. There is a sense that she does not understand that theory (the abstract frameworks used to organize and structure information called data) is inherently dynamic" (COLSON, 2020, 3), is a caricature of what is being discussed.

A persistent criticism of the work is that it assumes the reader possesses a baseline knowledge that might not be present in the general public. Thus, the reviewer criticises the lack of explanation for terms such as "Atlantic Art", "Europe", and "modern country". This is taking criticism too far. It would be frankly tedious for the reader to seek to define every term. I do not believe it is setting the bar too high (or should that be BAR too high?) to suggest that when a researcher speaks of modern Spain in reference to their contemporary research they will not be including the Spanish Netherlands in that definition. The critique of jargon and abbreviations would be justified in a text aimed at the general, but not in a BAR aimed primarily at people with a pre-existing interest in rock art, or an active desire to learn more detail about rock art. One person's jargon is another person's technical language. For example, the criticism that the use of the abbreviation "BA" to signify "Bronze Age" is an example of the type of pedantry which litters the review (if the reader is left flummoxed by this abbreviation they can check the "Definition and Abbreviations" on page xxi).

There are numerous assertions in the previous review that gives the impression Valdez-Tullett is not forthcoming in her sources, unsystematic in her data collection, and does not clarify her case study selection criteria. As discussed earlier, these issues are discussed in the text, with detailed site-specific references all present in Appendix 1.

I was left with the impression that the main criticism of Valdez-Tullett's work is it was not exactly the book on rock art that Colson wanted to read. In this context perhaps the rock art work of Sarles would have better suited the previous reviewer (SARLES, 2018).

The conclusions of the previous review proceeds along the lines of a series of criticisms that verge on personal attacks. However, I would take special issue with the suggestion at the end of the review that the standard of written English within the book is poor, and confusing. This is simply not true.

I am sure even Valdez-Tullett would admit that for the public generally there are many excellent popular books on the subject that are more accessible, (e.g. the work of Stan Beckensall in England). However, for the archaeologist, or the serious amateur, this volume contains the technical detail, and clarity of sources and techniques

I would expect from a BAR derived from a PhD thesis. I would have no hesitation recommending this work to someone with a serious interest in the study of open air rock art sites.

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