

Archaeology, New Media, and Feminism: Intersections at Çatalhöyük

Çatalhöyük is a large Neolithic (7250-6150 B.C./uncalibrated 6500-5750 b.c.) tell site in the Konya Plain of Central Anatolia, Turkey where archaeological excavations have been ongoing for over forty years. Dr. Ian Hodder, a prominent archaeological theorist, has been overseeing the latest phase in the project. For the past ten years, Çatalhöyük has been at the forefront of theory and methodology in archaeology, supporting full disclosure of site reports and photographs available on the web at <http://www.catalhoyuk.com> and, most recently, periperatic video walks performed by archaeologist Dr. Ruth Tringham.

My work expands on the groundwork lain by Dr. Tringham's periperatic walks and Dr. Hodder's reflexive methodology. For many years archaeologists have been exploring the phenomenological experience of space as an interpretive tool for over a decade, but only recently have been able to create digital models appropriate to explore interpretive space. These models are rarely shared outside of the profession, much less with the public. Third-wave feminist scholarship within archaeology has resulted in a firmer dedication to public education and to a desire for an expanded, multi-vocal construction of the past. My own work speaks to this greater agenda.

For my dissertation research, I am constructing a virtual model of the architecture at Çatalhöyük that will then be used for pedestrian modeling and optimal route research. I will then create a geospatial wiki that outlines these paths, allowing visitors and archaeologists to retrace Neolithic footsteps, adding their own digital footprints to the palimpsest at the site. With this work I hope to encourage a more interactive perception of space and place, one that is informed not only by archaeological theory, but also modern interpretations and uses of the space.

In this paper I will outline the intersections between archaeology, new media, and feminist practice within my own current and future work at Çatalhöyük. At this Thinking Through New Media conference, I hope to encounter alternate viewpoints regarding my project, creating a new interdisciplinary space between new media and archaeology wherein an understanding of problems that arise in each are—such as materiality and uses of space and landscape—can be created from a better informed graduate student community.